THE GREYSKULL METHOD *for* POWERBUILDING

hardtokill

Johnny Pain

I'd like to dedicate this book to the two men who have been the most influential figures in the development of my training methodology. Without the writings of Dorian Yates, and Dante "DoggCrapp" Trudel, this book may not have been possible in its current form.

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Introduction

I began my love affair with bodybuilding when I was sixteen years old. Those of you who read my book "*Drop the Panties: The Greyskull Guide to a Better Body*", are already familiar with the story of my first major body transformation from 210lb fatty to 135lb skinny-fatty in less than three months. After said transformation I was left small, weak, and devoid of any sort of physique of which I could be proud.

I went from the fat kid, who well meaning friends and family would suggest lifestyle and dietary changes to, to the skinny kid who couldn't take his shirt off still, and who everyone suggested should "start working out", a comical sentiment considering the eighty pound transformation I had just undergone as a result of my obsessive compulsive workouts and radical diet.

I couldn't win. I sucked. I was sure of it.

I had excelled at sports up until ceasing to play in my freshman year of high school. As a kid I was the best all-around player on the tee ball and little league field, but couldn't run the bases quick enough due to having to constantly pull up my jeans while running (yes I played organized sports in jeans as a kid. Hey, we were poor). A pair of ninja turtles suspenders quickly remedied this problem, though served to make me look more like a white, sunken chested, red-headed Steve Urkel with my Kirby Puckett glove and Payless cleats (Don't worry about it, I'm working all of this out with my therapist).

I was so painfully thin it wasn't funny. I longed to look like the Steiner Brothers, Sting, The Ultimate Warrior, and the rest of my childhood heroes with bulging muscles, and big thick veins all over. I thought for sure that a few more years of growing would serve me well, and I'd be getting calls from Vince McMahon to try out by the time I graduated high school.

The calls didn't come however, though the events I outlined in Drop the Panties did get me into bodybuilding by the time my high school days were closer to being complete. I still remember the first few months of workouts; waiting for my friend Dan to come and pick me up to head to the gym in his mom's burgundy Mercury Sable, blasting the heat and talking about our respective love interests, and plans to woo them. Those were fun times now that I look back.

I quickly soaked up as much knowledge as I could regarding the subject of bodybuilding, and immersed myself headfirst in the bodybuilder's lifestyle. I was packing my lunches for school every day, usually grilled chicken salads, with a fat free yogurt and maybe a Myoplex bar. I worked hard to ensure that I was getting a meal in roughly every three hours, not the easiest thing to do when you are in school.

My diet was airtight, I never missed workouts, and I routinely did my cardio on my non-lifting days, yet I wasn't developing the massive, imposing physique that I always had in mind.

What I did not understand at the time, and came to learn much later, was that I was going about things all wrong. My diets were based on those of pre-contest bodybuilders; the kind of foods one would eat during the phase prior to getting on stage where shedding fat is the number one objective. I was not taking in nearly enough food to grow, even considering that I was spending roughly $300 per month on supplements from GNC and the Vitamin Shoppe.

You name it, I took it, protein shakes, lean mass stimulators, creatine, HMB, recovery drinks, pre workout stimulants, themogenics, anything that was on the market that promised results. At the time I only knew one person personally who used steroids, and that was just considered a monstrous, abhorrent thing to do, so those were out of the question for me at the time. Anything else was fair game however, yet despite my knowledge of supplements, my airtight diet, and my perfect gym attendance, I was looking more and more like a white Bruce Lee, and less and less like the Herculean beast I wanted to be.

In addition to the lack of adequate food intake for growth that I was experiencing as a result of trying to emulate the diets of pre-contest bodybuilders, my training was equally ineffective at producing the desired result. I was working conventional bodybuilding exercises in higher rep ranges like I saw guys doing in the magazines. I emphasized quality of the contraction, time under tension, and all of the cool training ideas that I read about. I was using supersets, giant sets, drop sets, and all of the other stuff that was out there.

What I wasn't doing was getting strong. I wasn't placing a tremendous of stress on adding weight to the bar, and I certainly wasn't training with an intensity that would spark the kind of growth that I was looking for. My training and diet were in serious need of an overhaul, but I was too young, dumb, and full of bubblegum to know it.

It wouldn't be until several years later, after numerous life experiences caused me to leave bodybuilding alone in pursuit of other things for a while, that I would learn the "secret" to building formidable mass and strength.

After training more in line with a powerlifting style for while, and eating massive amounts of food, I shot up considerably in size. I was unhappy with my overall physique however, as aesthetics and bodybuilding had always been the primary reason that I lifted weights. My body was large, but not lean, and not symmetrical.

Once I realized that I could clean the diet up a bit, and still take in large amounts of calories and protein, albeit harder to do, I started to even things out a bit. There was however, the problem of my physique not being complete, and looking a bit more Mr. PotatoHead-ish than I liked in terms of development.

It was around that time that it really hit me. My idol as a kid, Dorian Yates, who I had been trying to emulate in my youthful bodybuilding pursuits must have been taking in a bit more food than I had been. He also must have actually gotten strong instead of my assumption that the massive weights he would move just kind of happened as a result of years of going through the motions in the gym.

It all made sense. Lift heavy weights like a powerlifter, while sticking to movements that were known mass builders, in rep ranges that were ideal for growth, while eating large amounts of clean food, and not neglecting the cardio component.

How had this eluded me all this time?

It was the years of training, reading, experimenting, and training others that followed that allowed me to write this book today.

I came to terms with the idea that I was a bodybuilder at heart, and that building mass while keeping leaner than most was always my number one priority in the gym.

I had begun a misinformed bodybuilder, and over a decade of trail, error, and disappointment, had emerged a Powerbuilder.

This book is designed to allow you, the reader to learn from my mistakes, and get on the path that you wish to be on now.

Section One:

So what is Powerbuilding?

This is a question that I get asked quite frequently. The term has become something of a buzzword in the strength-training world. It is difficult to clearly define as a term, since so many people take so many different approaches and call them "Powerbuilding".

What I will do is give you my best explanation of what the term means to me with regards to programming.

Powerbuilding is essentially a set of principles applied to one's training with the desired outcome of producing significant hypertrophy (growth), via increasing strength in movements that are known for building the most mass. It's all about getting the most bang for your training buck.

The movements are selected based on their effectiveness at increasing mass in the targeted body parts, and are performed with high intensity, in rep ranges that are the most conducive to growth.

Make no mistake; this is not about building showy muscles with no strength behind them, quite the contrary. Powerbuilding exists on the idea that when you get stronger, you grow (assuming that you are feeding yourself with that outcome in mind). We use the most effective methods of building strength so that the resultant growth is optimized.

If you're coming to this program from the Greyskull LP, as I hope you are, then you have already learned what it means to be intense in your training. The "money set" in the program taught you how to push without an arbitrary number in mind, and give one hundred percent to the lift that you were currently doing. This program will require you to muster up that intensity, and then some in order to take things to the next level of strength and mass development.

A little later we will be looking at the various intensity techniques that are used as part of this program. I think you will find that they tax you to a new extent beyond even what you are accustomed to working with in the Greyskull LP. Techniques like forced reps, drop sets, pre-exhaust, and rest pause, will allow you to push past intensity barriers that exist inherently when simply taking a lift to failure

This will be some of the hardest training that you have ever undertaken, without a doubt. This will also be some of the most rewarding, and effective training that you can imagine, and if you've become an intensity junkie like me, then you'll enjoy this more than anything you've ever done.

The idea is simple; we bust our asses through a few extremely difficult sets per workout, creating the most massive stimulus for growth that we can optimally recover from in time to train the same body parts again in a few days time. From there, we go home, eat like horses (figuratively speaking, I don't mean we chomp away on carrots and apples all day), and do our best to kick the harem of girls out relatively early, or at least ask them to quietly do our laundry, or prepare tomorrow's meals so that we can get as much quality rest as possible.

The result is the development of strength and muscle mass beyond what you've previously been able to experience. Constructing a truly imposing physique using the lessons aggregated from the best bodybuilders, strongmen, and powerlifters in history,

Section Two:

Powerbuilding Principles

Here's a look at the most basic principles of what I call Powerbuilding in a bit more detail.

Progressive Resistance

This is the mother of all training principles, and the backbone of any good strength-training program. Simply put, if you are not adding weight to the bar over time, you are not getting stronger, and you are not building muscle mass. The idea in this program is to increase weight on each movement after successfully hitting your target rep range.

Rotation of Big Money Exercises

Instead of resetting a movement, or pushing into the red on several workouts where you fail to meet the rep range, we simply rotate the lift out with another exercise that you then are able to progress in weight on for a period in time. Additionally, the alternating nature of your "A" and "B" days with the inclusion of their "1" and "2" variants allow more time in between sessions featuring the same movements. During this time, another movement with a synergistic, strength-building effect is trained for the same bodypart, and VOILA! You are stronger when you get back to the last movement.

Proven Rep Ranges/ Schemes

Nothing about the rep ranges and rep schemes in this program is arbitrary or accidental in any way. We use the rep ranges that are most conducive to building strength, and resultant muscle mass for each movement.

Frequency of Training Stimulus for Each Body part

By using an A/B setup, we are able to train half of the body in each workout. This means that over the course of two weeks, each half of the body has been trained three separate times. During this period of time, the body has been exposed to two different stimuli for each of the body parts trained, one stimulus one time, and the other twice. Higher frequency of exposure to good training stimuli means more potential opportunities for growth. Each body part gets trained six times per month instead of four.

Intensity!

Intensity in training is everything. Intensity has nothing to do with yelling like you just sat on former New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevy's lap by accident as he was posted up on a park bench watching the local university cross country team stretch shirtless before a run on each rep, but has everything to do with leaving nothing in the tank and giving your absolute all into every set of every session.

This program absolutely requires you to be as intense as possible in every workout. You'll notice that there is not a ton of volume in the sessions per body part. We are not volume training here. That means that each set has to count.

No half assing.

No limp wristing.

No lily livering.

No…. you get the point.

In addition to the base requirement of savage intensity, there are several intensity techniques that we use to enhance the training effect of the program. These are included as and when needed, and serve as a can of hairspray on the flame that is the almighty growth stimulus.

Food Intake

YOU WILL NOT GROW IF YOU DO NOT EAT ENOUGH!

Let me say that again,

YOU WILL NOT GROW IF YOU DO NOT EAT ENOUGH!

This program will give you all of the spark you need to ignite the fire of growth, but the fire will not burn for shit without adequate fuel. You will need to make the fork your best friend, and put in the work at the table in order to get the most from your efforts. The diet section of this book will outline some of the basic principles that you will need to know in order to eat for growth.

Section Three:

Program Overview

Here are the nuts and bolts of the Powerbuilding program.

When you're done reading this section you will have learned how the individual movements are classified, how they are grouped into "A" and "B" days for workouts, and how to assemble your own program using these ideas.

You will also learn the additional intensity techniques that we use to really get things moving once their application is appropriate for the trainee, as well as how to construct a program to bring up weak or lagging body parts.

I'm excited, aren't you?

Organization of the Movements

Terminology

For organizational purposes I will be using a lot of common bodybuilding terminology, particularly when it comes to the organization of training the various muscle groups. While I am aware that the bench press, for example, is much more than a “chest” exercise, I will be calling it one for simplicity’s sake. If this bothers the internet strength addict purist in you then go take a pee and then give yourself a swirlee, we’ve got more important business here than harping on what muscles are involved in a movement, or being too “proud” to be among the bodybuilders with our lingo.

The movements used in this program will be classified by the following categories:

- Chest
- Chest (Tricep Focus)
- Shoulders
- Back 1
- Back 2
- Squat
- Biceps

Next we will examine each of the movement categories, and their associated exercises. Later we will see how these movement categories get assembled into an A/B style rotation, and build a program to get you strong like bull, and massive like my genitals.

The Chest Movements

The following list is of my most heavily recommended “chest” movements to use for this program with the garage gym trainee in mind. Remember that I’m writing this book specifically with the trainee who has the basic equipment necessary to complete the Greyskull LP at his disposal and not much else. If you were to train in a commercial gym, or otherwise have more equipment options, then this list is certainly not all-inclusive, and could be added to with ease.

The big money chest exercises are:

- The Incline Bench Press
- The Flat Bench Press
- The Incline Dumbbell Bench Press
- The Flat Dumbbell Bench Press

Simplicity is thick in the air here. These are the big boys that will add slabs of mass to your pecs and upper body when trained heavy, hard, and often.

The “A” days are divided into Chest, and Chest (Tricep Focus). Next we will look at the Tricep Focus movements.

The Chest (Tricep Focus) Movements

These are the movements to be performed as the first lift (in the absence of a chest pre-exhaust set) on the "A2" days. These movements hammer, and will increase strength and mass to the chest and entire upper body, but place a great degree of emphasis on the triceps as well, and are extremely effective at adding mass to the upper arm.

Remember, the triceps make up over two thirds of the entire upper arm mass. When most think of wanting bigger arms, they immediately think biceps. While it is also very important to train the biceps, training the triceps heavy and hard, (no single arm pushdowns and kickbacks here) will have you filling out the sleeves of your shirts with a quickness.

The Chest (Tricep Focus) Moneymakers are:

- The Close Grip Bench Press
- The Reverse Grip Bench Press
- The Steep Incline Close Grip Bench Press

Get brutally strong on these exercises, and you'll be packing some serious guns (did I really just type that?)

The Shoulders Movements

These are the movements that we use to cause significant growth in the shoulders. All are designed with basic equipment in mind. Big, cannonball shoulders are essential to the overall physique, and the development that you see in the shoulders of bodybuilders is one of the major differences from that of middle of the road powerlifters.

These are the big boy movements that are guaranteed to add mass to the shoulders if they are trained heavy, with intensity.

- The Press
- The Push Press
- The Seated Behind the Neck Press
- The Seated Dumbbell Press
- The Barbell Hang Clean and Press
- The Double Kettlebell Clean and Press

The Squat Movements

This is the simplest category of them all. Since we are speaking most directly to the garage gym trainee here, we don’t have a tremendous amount of variety possible when training the legs intensely. Our two big hitters for this purpose are, not surprisingly:

- The Squat
- The Front Squat

What we do different with the squatting movements, that works extremely well, is cycling the rep schemes from session to session. You might do a Back Squat in each of your “A” sessions for a period of time in your training, but the rep range will be different and therefore will provide a different stimulus.

Don’t stress over the lack of options on this one. Trust me, unless you’re able to knock out twenty reps with 405 on the bar with relative ease, you have plenty of time and room to grow your legs using only these basic movements.

The Biceps Movements

Here we go, load ‘em up and fire at will, gun show time.

The biceps are trained first on the “B” days to pave the way for the almighty back to be hammered, as it deserves to be. The inherent benefit of training the biceps first is that it serves as a built in pre-exhaust (though the concentration curl can be added as a pre-exhaust before the main biceps movement in certain situations) and increases the effect of the heavy back movements in training the biceps. That’s right, start out “B” day with biceps, and your guns will be getting trained more and more with each back movement you go all out on.

The garage gym bicep builders are:

- The EZ Curl Bar Curl
- The EZ Curl Bar Drag Curl
- The Alternating Dumbbell Curl

The Back 1 Movements

These are the movements that bodybuilders have traditionally called "back width" exercises. They are the vertical pulls. While many have purchased a Pulldown machine for use with the Greyskull LP, I am not going to assume that everyone owns one, and therefore have included a few alternatives.

The big Back 1 hits are:

- The V-Handle Pulldown
- The Close Grip Pulldown
- The Wide Grip Pulldown
- The Weighted Chin-up (close, regular, or wide grip)

While owning or having access to a Pulldown machine is optimal, it is not necessary entirely in order to do this program. As in the case of the squat, by varying rep schemes, and hand positions, it is possible to make significant progress over a long period of time using a simple dipping belt, and a chin-up bar.

The Back 2 Movements

These are the “back thickness” movements to the bodybuilding community. These are the heavy ball busters that make back day miserable in that special way.

These are my babies. It’s no secret that I love heavy back training. The following lifts are all of my favorite mass builders that you can use with this program.

- The Deadlift
- The Sumo Deadlift
- The Rack Pull
- The Deficit Deadlift
- The Yates Row
- The T Bar Row

Cycle these bad boys into your program, get strong on them for a time, and then retire them for a bit while you make another lift your bitch. Repeat this process for several months/years, and you will have a back that makes Sasquatch jealous.

The A/B Setup

This program hacks up the entire body into two groups of body parts, which are then trained on alternating training days. The program is divided into “A” days and “B” days. This style setup allows for the entire body to be trained three times in two weeks of training. As I indicated before, this presents more total opportunities for the body to repair itself and grow per week, month, and year. More exposures to quality stimuli means more quality growth over time.

Our “A” Days consist of the following:

- Chest
- Shoulders
- Squat

Our “B” Days likewise contain the following muscle groups:

- Biceps
- Back 1
- Back 2

To allow for both more progress, and more recovery over a longer period of time, we also add a variation to each “A” day and “B” day. These days become known as “A2” and “B2” respectively.

The “A2” day is different from the “A1” in that the first movement, a “chest” exercise, is selected from the “Chest (Tricep Focus)” category. This allows the triceps to be hit a bit harder than they are normally in a conventional chest exercise, while still providing a great stimulus for growth to the actual chest and entire upper body. The break from the heavier loads used for a movement like the Incline Bench Press also serves to prolong the amount of time that one is able to make progress on that lift, and in turn build more mass.

While the “B2” day resembles the “B1” day to a “T” minus the actual movements and/or rep schemes used, the “A2” day looks like this:

“A2” Day

- Chest (Tricep Focus)
- Shoulders
- Squat

Building Your Very Own A/B Setup

In order to build you're A/B setup, you will need to select a movement from each category for the given workout. You may select the Incline Bench Press for your "A" day Chest movement for example. You will then need to pick a Shoulder movement, and a squat rep range for either the Back Squat or Front Squat.

Both of your "B" days will follow suit. You will pick a Biceps movement, as well as a Back 1, and Back 2 movement.

For the "A2" day, you will simply choose a Tricep Focus movement as the first lift of the day in place of one from the Chest list.

You will stick with these movements until you are unable to get into the rep range assigned for two workouts in a row. At that point, you will move on by *replacing only that movement* with another one from the appropriate list.

The idea is to make as much progress as possible in a given movement over as long of a period of time as your body's ability to adapt allows. Think about it, you presumably went months or even years making progress with four basic movements in the Greyskull LP prior to taking this program on, so resist the urge to jump around frequently or prematurely add new movements to the setup.

Once you've exhausted your ability to progress linearly in another movement, it is then acceptable to return to one that you used and exhausted previously. You will find that you will come back to that old favorite stronger than ever, and will be able to make progress with it for a period in time once again.

This rotation of movements is one of the foundational principles that the program is built on, and plays a major role in the effectiveness of this type of training over the long term.

Next we will look at the rep ranges associated with each movement. You will begin the program with the recommended number of sets and reps, and run each movement to exhaustion of progress before beginning to incorporate any of the intensity techniques that we will soon cover.

I know I sound like a party pooper with this one, but trust me, if you go about it this way, you'll thank me when your clothes don't fit you anymore, and you're forced to buy "wet floor" signs in bulk off of eBay to carry with you when you go in public. It is your civic to warn otherwise unaware members of society of the puddles of vaginal fluids that you will be leaving in your wake.

Appropriate Rep Ranges by Movement

The Chest Movements

The Incline Bench Press	6-8 reps
The Flat Bench Press	6-8 reps
The Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	8-10 reps
The Flat Dumbbell Bench Press	8-10 reps

The Chest (Triceps Focus) Movements

The Close Grip Bench Press	6-8 reps
The Reverse Grip Bench Press	6-8 reps
The Steep Incline Close Grip BP	8-10 reps

The Shoulders Movements

The Press	6-8 reps
The Push Press	6-8 reps
The Seated Dumbbell Press	8-10 reps
Double Kettlebell Clean and Press	8-12 reps

The Squat Movements

The Squat	4-6, 10-12, or 12-20 reps
The Front Squat	4-6, 10-12, or 12-20 reps

The Biceps Movements

The EZ Curl Bar Curl	8-10 reps
The EZ Curl Bar Drag Curl	8-12 reps
The Alternating Dumbbell Curl	12-15 reps

The Back 1 Movements

The V-Handle Pulldown	6-8 reps
The Close Grip Pulldown	6-8 reps
The Wide Grip Pulldown	8-10 reps
The Weighted Chin-up	6-8 reps

The Back 2 Movements

The Deadlift	6-8 reps
The Sumo Deadlift	6-8 reps
The Rack Pull	6-8 reps
The Deficit Deadlift	6-8 reps
The Yates Row	6-8 reps

The Training Templates

Below are three templates for laying all of this out. The only one that really matters is the first one, since it is the King of all training splits. The other two are presented as alternatives only for those who are legitimately unable to perform the basic three-day split.

The Basic Three-Day Split

This is the meat and potatoes Powerbuilding training split that I use with most clients. This is also the exact same split that I am currently using in my own training. The three day per week set up allows for what I feel is the best balance between training frequency, and adequate/optimal recovery time. Training fewer days per week comes up short when it comes to maximum exposures to the all-important stimuli, while training more than three times cuts into the time needed to sleep, eat, repair, and rebuild, the necessary pieces of the puzzle for those looking to add the type of serious muscle mass that this program is designed to deliver.

As mentioned before the A and B designations mean the following:

A- Chest, Shoulders, Squat

B- Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

This is how two weeks of the basic three-day split is laid out.

Monday- A1

Wednesday- B1

Friday- A2

Monday- B2

Wednesday- A1

Friday- B1

Now that we've established the basic template, let's take a look at what two weeks of training using the three-day basic setup would look like when we include the movements.

Week One

Monday A1

Chest, Shoulders, Squat

Incline Bench Press 2 x 6-8

Seated Behind the Neck Press 2 x 6-8

Squat 10-12

Wednesday B1

Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

EZ Curl Drag Curl 15-20 reps Rest Paused

V-Handle Pulldown 2 sets 6-8 reps

Sumo Deadlift 6-8 reps

Friday A2

Chest (Tricep Focus), Shoulders, Squat

Close Grip Bench Press 2 x 6-8

Press 2 x 6-8

Squat 15-20

Week Two

Monday B2

Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

Alternating Dumbbell Curl 12-15 L/R

Weighted Chin-up 2 sets 6-8 reps

Rack Pull 6-8 reps

Wednesday A1

Chest, Shoulders, Squat

Incline Bench Press 2 x 6-8

Seated Behind the Neck Press 2 x 6-8

Squat 10-12

Friday B1

Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

EZ Curl Drag Curl 15-20 reps Rest Paused

V-Handle Pulldown 2 sets 6-8 reps

Sumo Deadlift 6-8 reps

Obviously the movements and set/rep schemes included in this example are not set in stone, and could be very different looking from one person's program to another, however, this demonstrates how the basic three day split hits each body part hard three rimes over the course of a two week span.

The Three-Day "Push, Pull, Legs" Split

This setup is a classic bodybuilding split, and can be used with great results. I prefer a conventional A/B split to this definitely, since it means more opportunities for growth due to the increased number of exposures to a stimulus for each muscle group over a ten-day period. That said, some trainees, particularly older guys, may find training in a push, pull, legs style template easier to recover from.

For everyone else, if you are capable of recovering from the stress of a hard paced A/B, then you should be doing it. Additionally, this setup **should not be a consideration** if you are training on steroids, but is a viable option for training in between cycles, or during a PCT when you are aggressively working to regain your natural testosterone production.

Here is what a three-day push, pull, legs setup would like.

Monday- Chest, Shoulders

Wednesday- Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

Friday- Squat

Week One

Monday

Chest, Shoulders

Incline Bench Press 11-15 reps Rest Paused

Press 11-15 reps Rest Paused

Wednesday

Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

EZ Curl Drag Curl 15-20 reps Rest Paused

V-Handle Pulldown 2 sets 6-8 reps

Sumo Deadlift 6-8 reps

Friday

Squat

Squat 15-20 reps

Week Two

Monday

Chest (Tricep Focus), Shoulders

Close Grip Bench Press 11-15 reps Rest Paused

Double Kettlebell Clean and Press 15-20 reps Rest Paused

Wednesday

Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

Alternating Dumbbell Curl 15-20 reps Rest Paused

Rack Chin-up 10-12 reps

Rack Pull 6-8 reps

Friday

Squat

Squat 10-12 reps

The Two-Day Split

Doing this program two days per week can still deliver many of it's benefits, however, the rate at which growth will occur will obviously not be as rapid as it would be with a three day setup. I realize that there are some for which scheduling is an issue, and that a two day setup provides the only realistic training option, particularly with the equipment-based nature of this program, and for those of you who fit this bill, the following is your best option.

You will simply complete one "A" and one "B" day each week. The following week you will do the same, but with your "A2" and your "B2" days. One can expect to progress for quite a long time on each movement in this manner.

A two-day split would look something like this:

Week One

Monday

A1- Chest, Shoulders, Squat

Incline Bench Press 11-15 reps Rest Paused

Press 11-15 reps Rest Paused

Squat 10-12 reps

Thursday

B1- Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

EZ Curl Drag Curl 15-20 reps Rest Paused

V-Handle Pulldown 2 sets 6-8 reps

Sumo Deadlift 6-8 reps

Week Two

Monday

A2- Chest (Tricep Focus), Shoulders, Squat

Close Grip Bench Press 11-15 reps Rest Paused

Double Kettlebell Clean and Press 15-20 reps Rest Paused

Squat 15-20 reps

Thursday

B2- Biceps, Back 1, Back 2

Alternating Dumbbell Curl 15-20 reps Rest Paused

Rack Chin-up 10-12 reps

Rack Pull 6-8 reps

Intensity Techniques

In this section we will take a look at the methods that we use in order to add additional intensity to the training session once we are able to get the trainee to truly go balls out on a single, intense set.

Included are forced reps, rest pause training, and pre-exhaust training. Implementing these into the program is a bit more art than science, but there are some basic guidelines that we use.

Forced reps is the first method that we typically integrate, often times beginning it while the trainee is still following the Greyskull LP. This is applicable when we're dealing with someone who has already demonstrated that they are capable of going very hard on the main movement, and routinely exerts themselves to impressive levels. If you are coming to this program from the GSLP, it is safe to assume that you are ready to begin implementing forced reps into your training when you begin this program.

Rest Pause training is the King of intensity techniques. Using this method with the appropriate movements in this program will spur growth like nothing else. Before beginning to use rest pause, it is terribly important that you are able to generate a tremendous amount of intensity each and every session. Trust me, the method will not work its magic if you are half-assing your sets. I generally recommend that you exhaust a movement once using a conventional set approach, or by combing said approach with forced reps before using rest pause. If you choose to dive right into RP, just make sure that you're moving the weights with intensity that you have no doubt I would be proud of if I were there with you.

The last method presented here is the Pre-Exhaust method. This is used to bring up a weak body part. The how is outlined later. Keep in mind that you should not be pre-exhausting all of your lifts. Generally we will work one weak body part at a time, with a maximum of two. If something is lagging, you can start adding this method as outlined once you have graduated from straight sets to rest pause training.

The takeaway here, as always, is to make sure you have a solid foundation built with the requisite intensity before you go trying to add in a bunch of the more fancy and exciting stuff. Going all out on a simple movement for a single set will produce a much better result than adding in a bunch of intensity techniques when you aren't yet ready for them.

Remember that it is always about the results that we are getting much more than it is about what method we are using to accomplish the task.

Forced Reps

Forced Reps is the first intensity technique that you should incorporate into your training. As long as the notation is correct in your log, there is no reason why you cannot implement forced reps into your training from the start.

Forced reps require you to have a training partner, and are only possible on certain movements. For example, the press, squat, and deadlift cannot be trained in this manner.

Basically this method involves having a training partner assist you with one or two (usually two) additional reps once you are unable to complete the reps on your own.

It is critical that you make a note in your log of how many reps were all yours, and how many your had assistance on, so that your data is accurate. It's also important that you not count any forced reps towards your rep range.

What I mean by this is that if you are performing a lift with a target rep range of 6-8 reps for example, and you are able to complete 4 reps without any assistance, those 4 reps are the only ones that count in terms of the data which you base your weight increases on.

Let's look at a simplified explanation of why forced reps can be helpful:

Let's say that you are bench pressing 225lb. Now you are finishing up your seventh rep and it is a real ball buster. You know that you will not make an eight rep, and your spotter can see this. After completing rep number seven, you lower the bar under control, reaping the benefits of another negative, and then push like hell in an attempt to complete the rep. Your spotter helps you half way through with just a small amount of lift. Once the bar reaches lockout, you opt to go for it again. This time you need a bit more help, but your partner still is not busting his ass to help; only giving you the amount of assistance that you need.

So for seven reps you were able to put at least 225lb of force into the bar.

On rep number eight, you couldn't muster that much due to fatigue, but you could maybe push 220lb into the bar (assuming 5lb of lift from your partner).

By the ninth and final rep, you might only get 210lb into the bar, but would have lowered 225lb to your chest under control two more times than you would have had you stopped at seven reps.

Now I know these figures are not exact; it would take a whole lot of expensive machinery, and a big-breasted female scientist with a pair of hot assistants to operate it, in order to determine the exact amount of force into the bar. If you have these resources, by all means use them. If not, accept that you had a more intense training experience by simply getting a bit of help from your training partner.

The non-scientific, inexact nature of forced reps are why we do not include them as reps completed towards our rep range targets, but don’t underestimate them as a means for squeezing a bit more out of your session. Just note in your log how many you did with assistance, and for the love of God do not turn the session into an upright row workout for your training partner by going too far beyond failure. Keep it to two reps past failure at a max.

Rest Pause Training

Rest Pause training is one of the most effective tools available for strength and mass gain. The manner in which I implement it is directly influenced by the writings and teachings of Dante Trudel. I have never seen another method produce the results that Rest Pause training in this manner will.

Rest Pause training involves performing a set of an exercise to failure, taking ten to twelve deep breaths, and then doing it again. Once you've reached failure the second time you repeat the process, taking another ten to twelve deep breaths and then going to failure for a third time.

It is a simple idea to implement into your training, but it is important to know what exercises Rest Pause can be used with.

As a basic rule, we use RP with all movements with the exception of squats, deadlifts, and other heavy pulling movements like the rack pull. We avoid using it with these movements because it presents a safety concern as the fatigue level and poundage's used can cause you to operate with bad form that can cause injury.

A rest pause set for the bench press might look like this.

225lb for 7 reps followed by twelve deep breaths, then 3 more reps, then twelve more breaths, and then one more grueling rep for a total of 11 reps.

When we use RP, we have a rep range target. This number is the total number of repetitions that we are looking to get out of the three efforts. Below I will list the recommended rep ranges for each movement when performed RP style.

Rest Pause Rep Ranges by Movement

Pressing Movements (Shoulders)	11 to 15 reps
Bench Press Variations (Chest)	11 to 15 reps
Vertical Pull movements (Back 1)	11 to 15 reps
Chest (Tricep Focus) movements	15 to 20 reps
Biceps movements	15 to 20 reps

Increases in weight can be made once the desired rep range is reached. If you choose to, you can wait until you are deeper in the rep range before adding weight. This is particularly effective with dumbbell exercises, which do not allow for as incremental of an increase as a barbell movement does.

For instance, in the previously mentioned example of our guy bench-pressing 225 for 11 total reps, he has the option of increasing the weight on the next workout, or keeping the weight the same and shooting for a number deeper in the rep range. Neither approach is superior to the other; both have their place. I normally make the decision of the trainee or myself based on how I'm feeling that day and what my warm-ups feel like. If I feel like King Kong, and the warm ups re easy, I'll probably add weight. If I feel sluggish that day, or don't feel strong like some days, I'll opt to stay at the same weight and shoot for more reps.

Either way, as long as you're making progress in weight or reps, you are doing it right.

As is the case with conventional sets, once you fail to make progress on the lift for two sessions in a row, you swap the movement out for another from its category, and have a go at that one until the progress stops once again.

Notation for a rest pause set should look like this in your training log.

Bench Press 225lb 7. 3. 1 RP (11)

Pre-Exhaust Training

Pre-Exhaust is an intensity technique that we use specifically to bring up weaker body parts. It involves performing an isolation exercise for the targeted body part prior to completing the big compound movement for the day. This beats the muscle up prior to the big effort and makes the big movements have a more pronounced effect on growth for the targeted area.

This method is useful for those who have a stronger body part that is doing the Lion's share of the work during the compound movement. If your chest is lagging behind, chances are your triceps or anterior delts are stronger relatively speaking, and tend to take the brunt of the load in the bench press movements. We use pre exhaust to combat this, and spark new growth for the weaker muscle.

Pre exhaust can be combined with forced reps or RP training, but I advise against using pre exhaust for more than two body parts at a time, say chest and biceps.

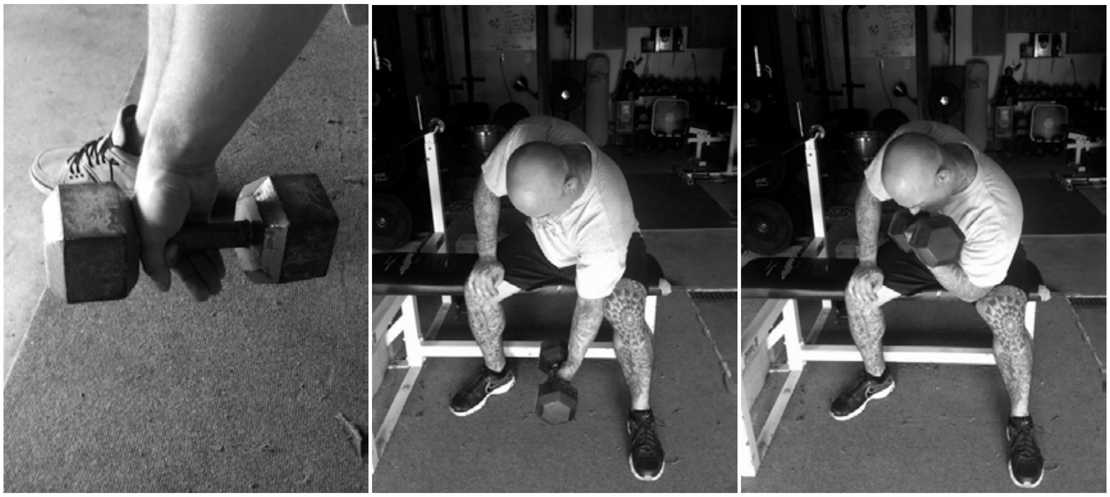
The main movements that we use for pre exhaust will be listed on the following pages with their appropriate rep ranges.

Pre-Exhaust for the Biceps: The Concentration Curl

If biceps are a weak part for you then you may wish to include a pre-exhaust set of concentration curls before your big bicep movement on the appropriate days. Keep in mind that the biceps represent about one third of the upper arm musculature however, and that if your arms are lacking, you might want to consider whether it is really your biceps, and not your triceps that need to be brought up.

This one is the king of pre-exhaust movements for the biceps. Hit them hard with slow, controlled concentration curls before your big money movement of the day, and you will see new growth in a hurry.

This one is very straightforward. Sit on a bench and rest your elbow against the inside of your thigh. Let the curling arm extend down towards the ground. Without any body English whatsoever, curl the weight to the top, flexing the muscle as hard as possible for about a one and a half count. Lower the bell slowly in a smooth, controlled negative.

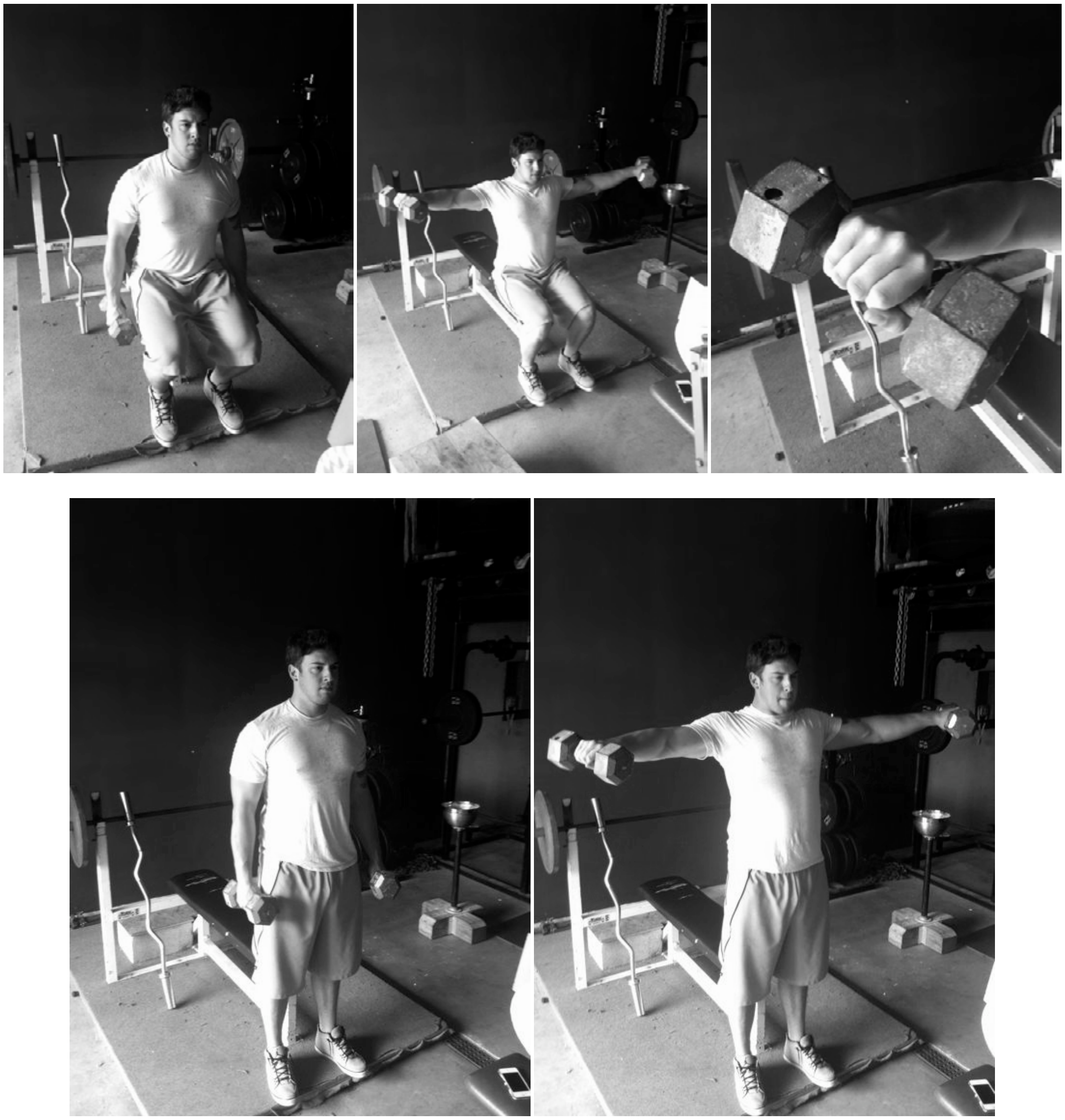


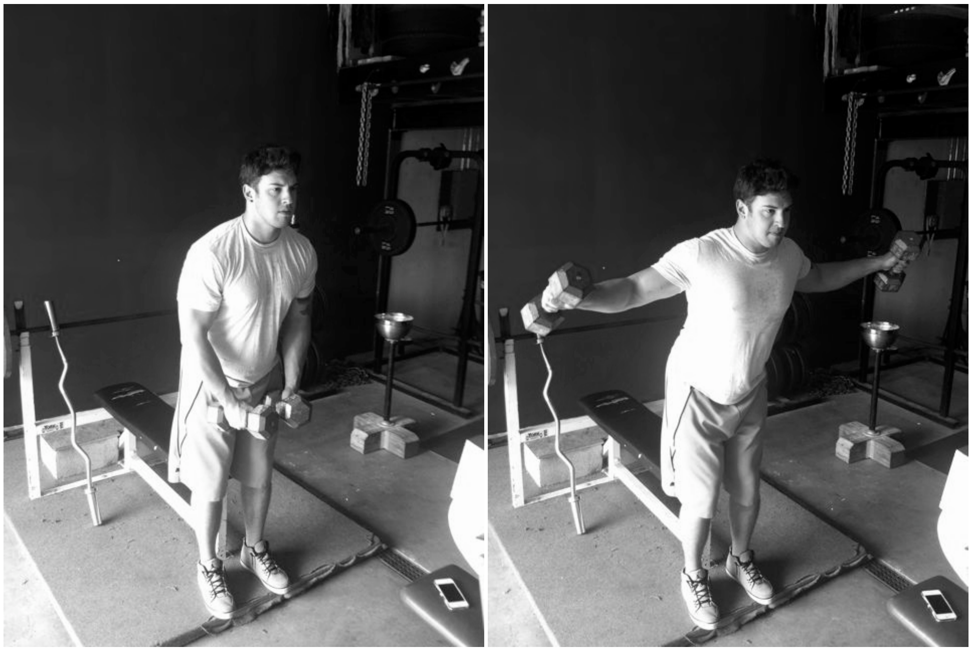
The Concentration Curl; Note the position of the dumbbell in the hand prior to the movement. The bell is sitting against the thumb side of the hand. The additional stress that this method places on the biceps when the hand is supinated at the top makes it even more effective at training the entire muscle.

Pre-Exhaust for the Shoulders: The Lateral Raise

We use the lateral raise as a pre-exhaust for the deltoids. Pick a weight that you can get 15-20 total reps with using the method below.

Begin seated and perform as many reps as you can. When you can't get any more seated, stand and knock out a few more before reaching failure completely. Keep the thumb side of the dumbbell level or pointed slightly down as if "pouring out" a liquid.



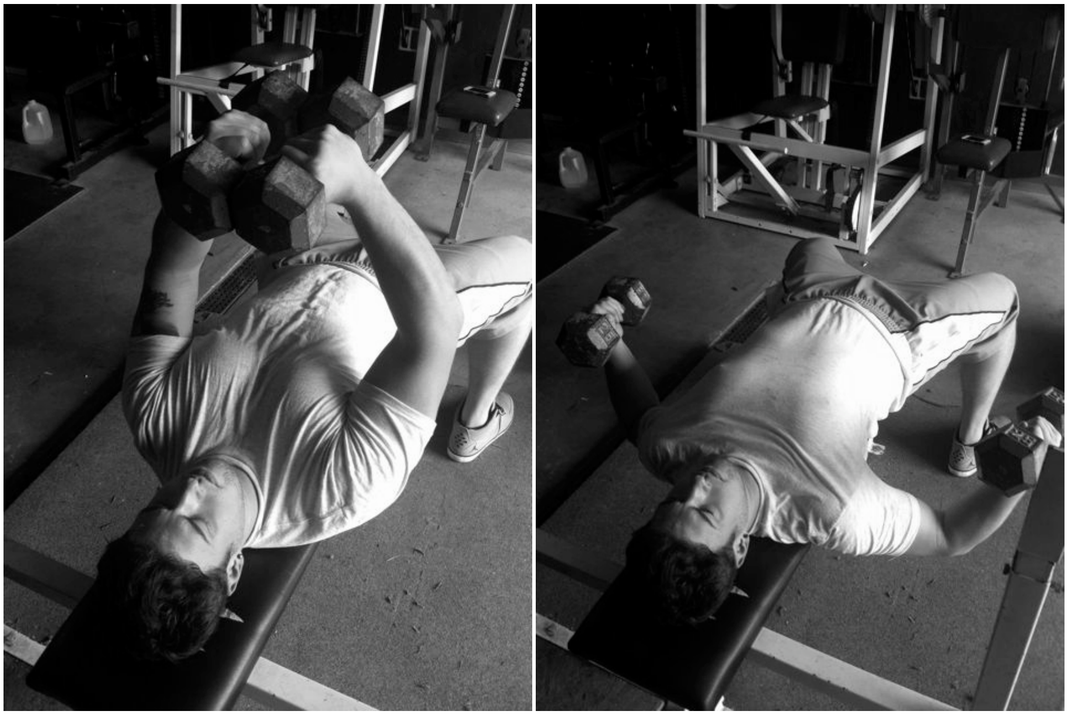


The Lateral Raise

Pre-Exhaust for the Chest: Dumbbell Flye

Use a weight that you can get for 12-15 reps here. Note that this one is used on both the Chest days, and the Chest (Triceps Focus) days if the Chest is a weak part that you are trying to bring up.

This movement is used to pre-exhaust the chest. This has never been a notorious mass builder, though it is excellent for our purposes here. The biggest thing to keep in mind when performing this movement is to keep your arms in the position that they would be in if you were "hugging a tree" as Dorian says. Slow and controlled is the name of the game with these.

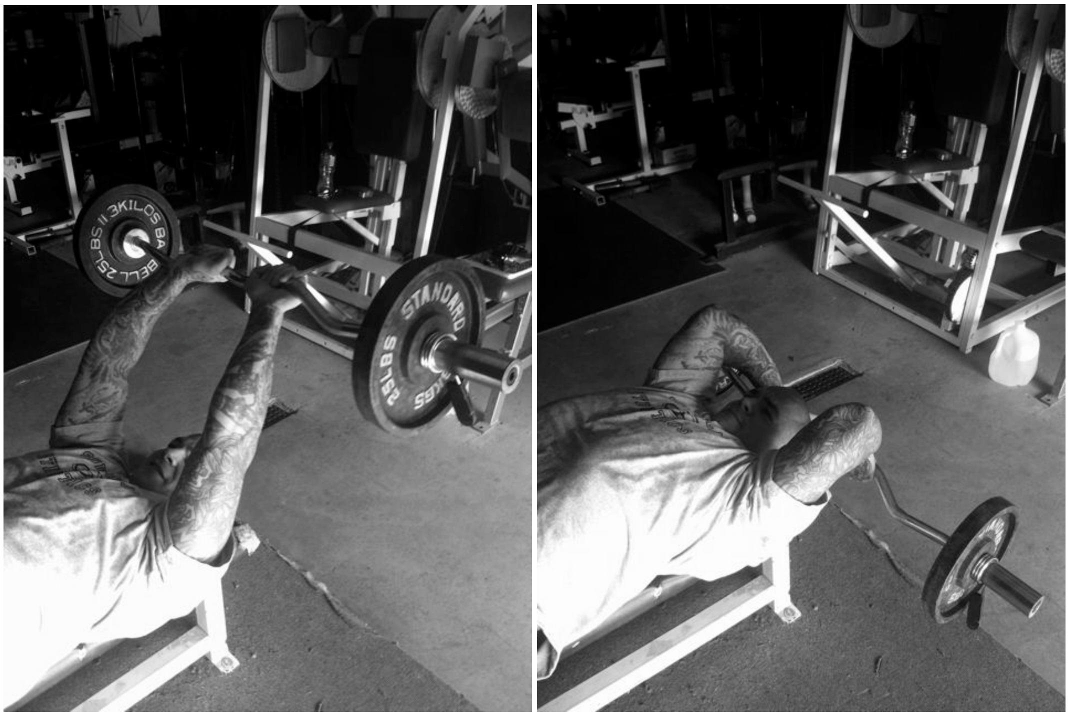


The Dumbbell Flye

Pre-Exhaust for the Triceps: The Lying Triceps Extension

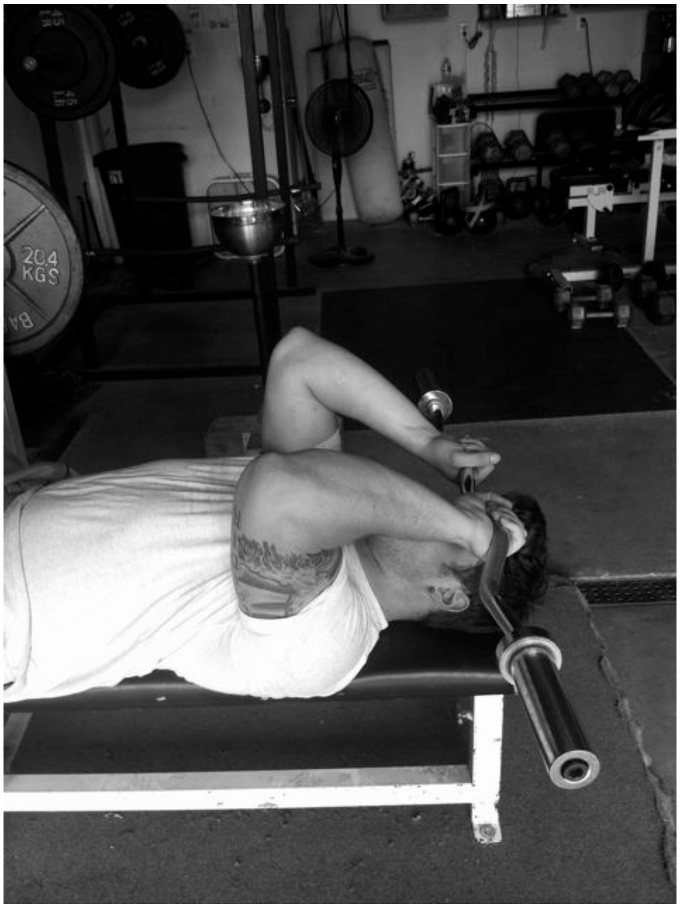
This movement is great for isolating the triceps. The overhead position allows you to hit the long head of the triceps on the side closest to the body better than any other movement. Pick a load that you can get for about 20 reps on this one. We don't look to go heavy here because of the isolation nature of the movement, and the fact that we are just looking to throw the triceps a beating before the big money lift of the day.

This one is often referred to as a "Skullcrusher". I don't use that term because when done correctly, the bar does not come near the forehead. Note how Tommy's arms are at a forty-five degree angle in the top position. This takes much of the stress off of the triceps tendons, and increases the effectiveness of the movement. These should be performed smooth and with a hard contraction at the top. There is no movement from the shoulder; the forearm is the only portion in motion during the lift.



The Lying Triceps Extension

Below, Devin is illustrating the sharp elbow angle required to perform a conventional "Skullcrusher". You can see how the triceps tendon is placed under undue stress here.

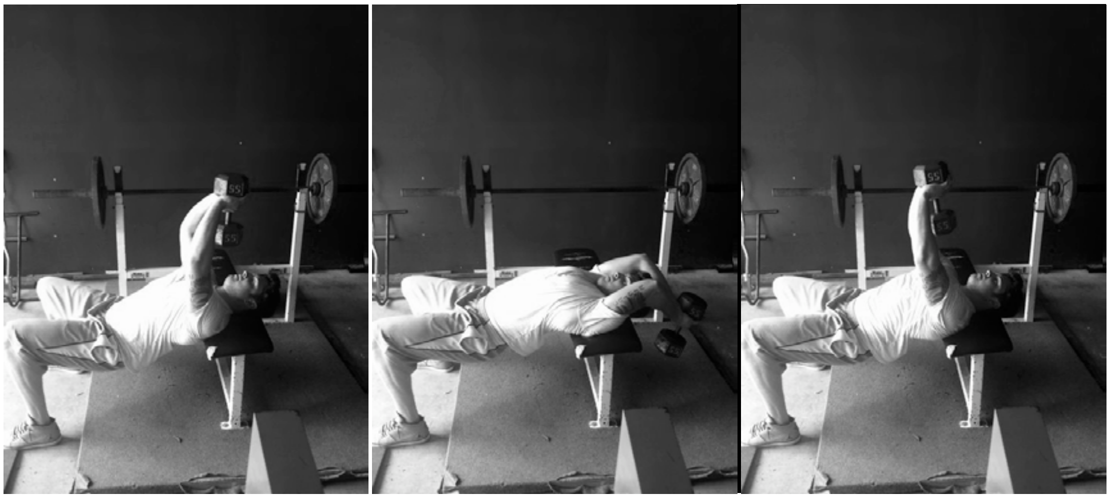


What Not To Do

Pre-Exhaust for the Back: The Dumbbell Pullover

This is the main pre-exhaust movement that we use for the lats. A pullover machine is optimal due to its longer range of motion, but for those without access to one, the dumbbell pullover represents a solid alternative.

Slow and controlled, exhaling on the way down is the way to go here. Choose a dumbbell that allows about 10-12 slow, controlled repetitions for this one.



The Dumbbell Pullover

Section Four:

Diet

My book SWOLE: The Greyskull Growth Principles provides a very solid outline of the methods that I use in helping trainees pack on lean body mass. I recommend that you pick it up for a more comprehensive look at how to set up and titrate a mass gain diet. Here I will provide a few basic tips to help you get started eating your way to massiveness.

The Basics

You will need to be taking in quite a bit of protein, and quite a bit of calories in order to build a lot of muscle. As a general rule you should build all of your meals around a protein source, which is to be eaten first when consuming the meal. I have a preference for red meat, chicken thighs, and whole eggs as protein sources for someone looking to add mass. After the protein is out of the way, you should fill up with good carbohydrate sources like rice, pasta, or potatoes if it is before about five hours prior to bedtime. After that point, it's veggies galore with your protein source.

In order to grow big, you will have to eat big. You will probably have to eat quite a bit more than you think is a lot. It helps to space your meals out about every three hours throughout the day. This makes it easier than trying to stuff yourself with the same amount of food over two or three meals, and has a positive effect on body composition (in my experience).

I like to have trainees alternate between solid food meals and shake meals. This is particularly effective and applicable if your appetite is not on board with your plans to get huge. If that is the case, don't sweat it; your appetite will grow with you. You're going to have to tough it out and stuff yourself in the beginning, but soon you will be the man mountain ordering double entrees every time you go somewhere for dinner.

A shake should consist of 50 or more grams of protein mixed with whole milk (if you're on the slim side), or a calorie free liquid if your body fat is a bit higher. SWOLE outlines a few great recipes for mass gain shake concoctions that work extremely well for adding the good pounds.

It's also important that you take in lots of water while training with a program like this. You won't grow to your full potential without it, and will find yourself chronically dehydrated, especially in warm climates, due to level of exertion that you will be putting out on a regular basis in your training sessions.

Section Five:

Training with Aids (wait, that came out wrong)

In this section we will look at some of the more common tools used to build man mountains. The items listed here are not mere fashion accessories; they are essential items that belong in the gym bag of anyone serious about applying the principles in this book.

Belts

Go for a heavy leather or suede belt approximately four inches in width. Thickness is not terribly important, however if the belt is too heavy it will be much more difficult to break in. I'd also steer you towards a single prong belt as opposed to a double prong for the ease in taking it on and putting it off. Double prongers can be a serious pain in the ass.

If you've graduated from the Greyskull LP, you should already have, and be accustomed to using a belt like this.

LiftingLarge.com

Footwear

This is a topic that is talked about entirely too much, in my opinion, on the Internet; what kind of shoes should I wear to train in. While this is a matter of personal preference, I do feel that there are some styles of footwear that are more suited to effective strength training, particularly during any movement in which your feet are in contact with the ground (if you want to wear stripper heels while you do decline bench presses, do so by all means, and send photos).

Basically, anything with a solid, flat-ish sole that ties tight around your foot will do the trick.

Some of the more popular styles that I recommend are:

- Converse Chuck Taylors
- Adidas Sambas
- Skate Shoes
- Work Boots (my personal favorite. Be sure to pair these with a cutoff flannel and jean shorts to pay homage to 90's Flex Magazine)
- Olympic Weightlifting shoes (though I'll probably clown on you a bit for these in Greyskull)

Styles that you want to avoid are anything with a big, cushiony sole, Vibram Five Fingers, Shape-ups, or any other type of footwear that doubles as an effective contraceptive or alternative lifestyle identification badge.

As I indicated above, work boots are my favorite training footwear. They balance support and rugged construction with a solid sole. They can be bought just about anywhere, and will last you a long time, particularly if you have a pair that is solely designated for training.

Whichever style you opt for, always remember the most important rule of training footwear;

You absolutely must look cool.

Keep this in mind if you're toying with the weightlifting shoe idea. If you train at a CrossFit gym, first off I'm sorry to hear that, second, you will probably look cool to the Lulu Lemmon and knee sock clad hotties, in which case I say go for it. If you're training in a commercial gym, then give serious consideration to the idea that no one there will think you're cool, except maybe the bodybuilding.com forum poster with his copy of Starting Strength, his NO Xplode, and his autographed Glen Pendlay poster in his gym bag (no offense to Rip or Pendlay intended, I'm slamming the internet gym nerd here).

The cardio bunnies, and figure girls you find in there will be less than impressed, and will probably think that you have some sort of condition. If you’re caught in a situation like this with an adequately hot broad in front of you inquiring about your blue Do Win’s, simply say “These are my magic shoes”, on the off chance that she’s had a long running fantasy of fucking Forrest Gump like Jen-nay should have after he beat up her hippie boyfriend at the Black Panther rally.

Let’s face it, that’s your only hope.

Knee Wraps

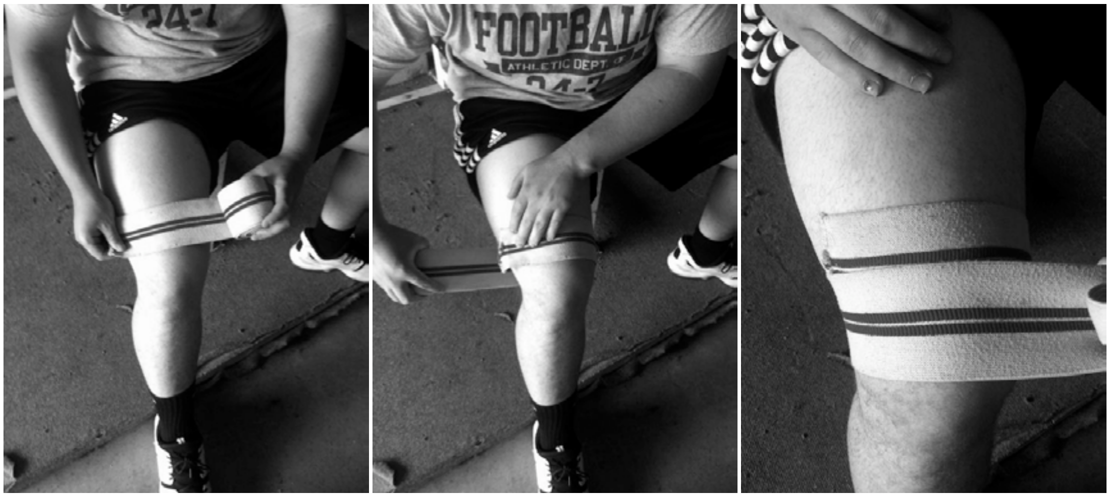
Ok this one always brings some comments from the penis, I mean peanut gallery. Hordes of people online, inhabiting forums, who don't lift heavy enough weights to matter, but run their mouths like a drunken Rosie Perez taking guesses at Pictionary, will tell you that knee wraps are "cheating" or not "raw" or some other bullshit.

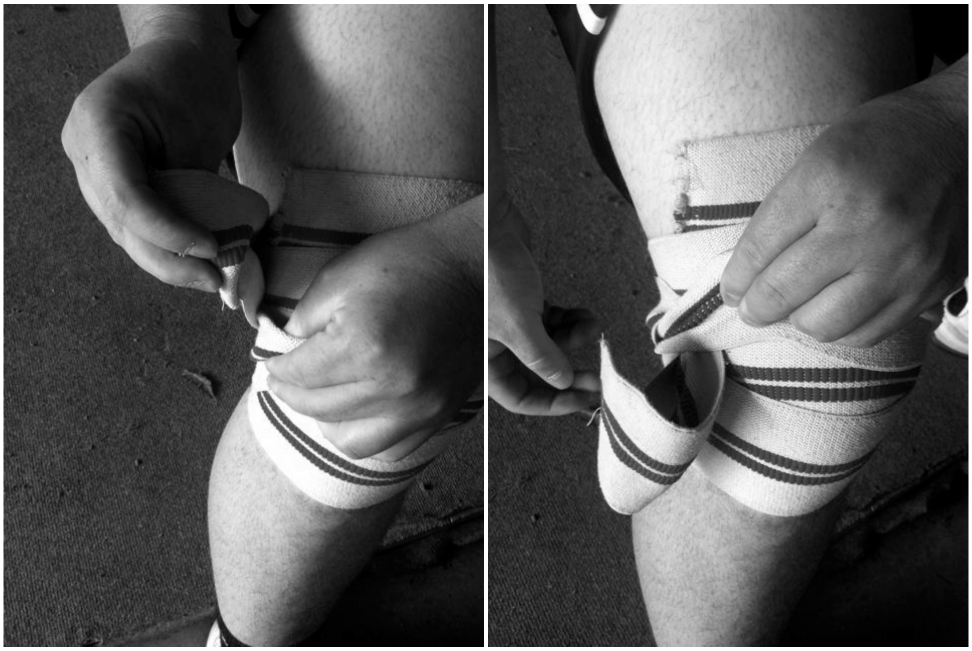
I thought that we were in the game of building muscle and getting strong here, where did all of these rules come from?

Fact is, I've never seen a belt, wrist wrap, strap, or knee wrap ever lift a weight in my life. Just like guns don't kill people, knee wraps don't lift weights. What they will do however is give you a bit of support in the squat, and yes, provide a small degree of assistance in completing the lift with heavy weights. I apologize for having an apologetic tone in that last statement, I make no apology for my endorsement of all things progress however. If you are one of these people who has scoffed at others for the notion of using knee wraps before, then find them and apologize. They are probably way stronger than you and might introduce you to one of the hot girls from their circle of regulars.

In the Powerlifting world there are several accepted ways of wrapping knees. Below I will illustrate the simple method that I use at Greyskull.

Trust me, when it comes to the squat, you get no additional pleasure from hitting it raw.





Knee Wraps

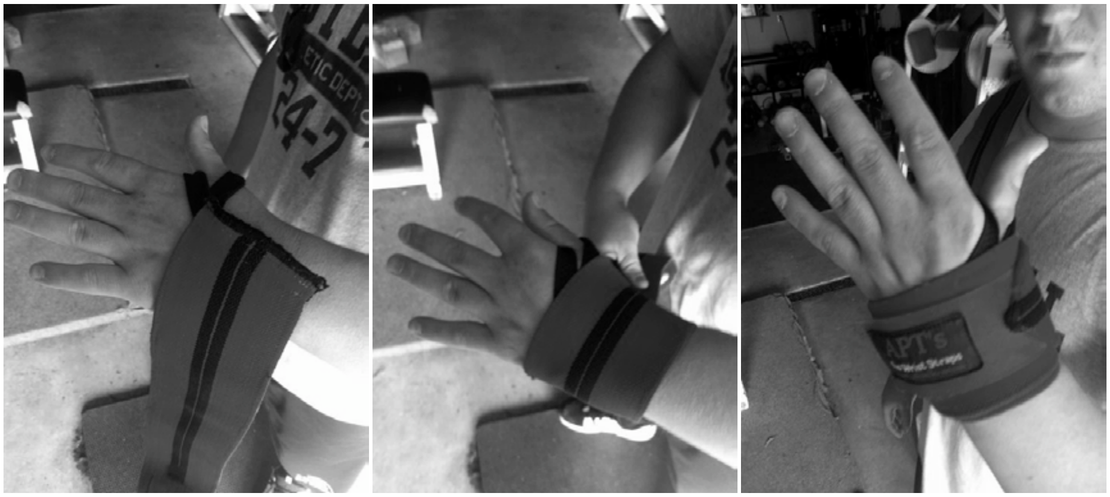
Start the wrap about two inches above the knee. Wrap snugly around the knee, with the top edge of the wrap lining up with the stripes on the center of the wrap. Wrap to about two inches below the knee, and when you start running out of wrap, pull a little bit of slack in order to tuck the free running end of the wrap through. Pull tight.

Wrist Wraps

These are another very helpful piece of training equipment that receives a bit of negative stigma from people who do not matter. Used correctly, wrist wraps provide a degree of support that most find quite comfortable and beneficial. Most will notice a slight increase in the amount of weight they are able to handle on pressing movements when using wraps. This is not due to some inherent magic quality that they possess, but rather by the increased stability in the wrist that is afforded them by the wraps.

I think that anyone using appreciable weights is a fool if they are not using wraps. Not because of a safety factor, or any of that, but simply because if they were to try them out once, they'd probably never want to lift heavy weights without them again.

Below I illustrate how to correctly wrap a wrist. You will notice that Zack has "cast" his wrist pretty well, wrapping pretty high up on the hand. I personally wrap mine just a tad lower than he is showing here, but there is nothing wrong with his positioning either. It is a personal preference thing, we are in no competition, and we have no rules that we need to follow.



Wrist Wraps

Ammonia Inhalants

These are just plain fun. Evidently Liberace used these while having anal sex with men to achieve a stronger orgasm. I know this because I sat through a longer than desired portion of *"Behind the Candelabra"*, the HBO movie starting Michael Douglas as Liberace, and Matt "Jason Bourne" Damon as his young lover. If you want to know the story behind how I ended up watching this gem, shoot me an email; I'll fill you in like Matt did to Michael.

I'm always amazed by the reaction of a lifter who has never snorted ammonia prior to taking on a big lift. It's normally comical to say the least. The ammonia vapor is very strong, and stings the nostrils (Anchorman anyone?). The eyes tear up, and the lifter experiences a rush of adrenaline.

Keep in mind that these little guys are used to wake up a person who has fainted, so imagine what they will do to you wide awake, at the gym, mentally psyched up for a big lift.

Simply crack one of these bad boys as per the directions, and take two giant breaths in, holding the capsule directly under your nose. You won't have any more questions after that.

Be sure to limit your ammonia use to times and lifts where it is necessary. They lose effectiveness like anything else if you overuse them. Save them for the big stuff, don't be that asshole that snorts one before his set of concentration curls.

Personally, I use them almost one hundred percent of the time when deadlifting or rack pulling, roughly half the time when bench pressing, and about one third of the times that I squat (the reason for this being that the squat sets tend to be quite long, and I find the initial discomfort of the ammonia unpleasant while under a heavy bar at around rep number ten).

Make use of these little miracles, you'll thank me.

Section Six:

The Dark Side

Ok, so let's talk about the eight hundred pound gorilla in the room. I'm of course talking about anabolic steroids and other performance enhancing drugs.

Most will understand that such compounds go hand in hand with the sport of bodybuilding, and have for many decades to this point. Some disagree entirely with their use, and I do not judge them for their decision. Many of those same people however will shell out hundreds of dollars per month on supplements from a store like GNC that promise steroid-like results.

To save you the time and suspense, none of said products work like steroids.

The topic of steroid use has been covered in great detail in my pal Brent Larson's book: "The SV Beginner's Guide to Anabolic Steroids", and I encourage anyone with an interest in this subject, or who is considering making the voyage to the dark side, to pick up that title and read it thoroughly.

For our purposes here, I will simply give my short two cents on the topic.

If you live in the United States, it is no secret that steroids are illegal to buy or use without a prescription (those compounds which are actively prescribed). For many, this represents a significant enough deterrent from their acquisition and use.

As real as their illegality is the fact that steroids do have a profound effect with regards to increasing recovery, muscle mass, protein usage, decreasing bodyfat, and increasing overall quality of life (in the opinion of many).

When used properly, the drugs are a big help to the aspiring Powerbuilder.

I do not discourage anyone who is over the age of twenty-one, and who has already laid a foundation of size and strength through hard, natural training, from using steroids.

Likewise I do not think that anyone under the age of twenty-one should be using steroids (with very few exceptions, and if you're unaware of what the exceptions may be, then you're not an exception). Steroid use before hormonal maturity can be detrimental in the long run, regardless of how effective they may seem to be during the usage period.

The main point I'd like to reiterate here is that education is absolutely necessary for anyone to use steroids safely and properly. Before you even consider the idea, read Brent's book cover to cover twice. There is no shortage of bad information on the compounds available on the net, so I cannot blanketly recommend information sources and websites that I do not endorse. You can however find quality information in a question and answer format on my forum at strengthvillain.com at anytime.

If you have questions on the subject, I encourage you to send them to me there.

Section Seven:

Exercise Index

This section will show notes and detail on the performance of many of the lifts included in this program. As always, this does not represent a complete list of all movements that can be used with this setup.

Some of the photos and descriptions have been excerpted from my book “The Greyskull LP: Second Edition”. That title goes into great detail on the major barbell movements, and I have included those portions in this work as a bonus.

The Bench Press

This is perhaps the most widely used barbell exercise in the world. As with the other lifts, I feel that people make teaching the bench press what I call “proprietarily complex” meaning that there is money to be made in over-complicating the safe performance of the lift. There are some things to account for in performing a bench press safely, but one needs to remember that this lift is performed everyday in gyms all of the world by people who have received no formal coaching on the movement.

The biggest issue that I have observed with flat benching, particularly when it is performed to the exclusion of any other bench press movements, is the risk of shoulder injury. The correlation between flat benching and bad shoulders has long steered bodybuilders towards the incline and decline variations of the lift where the risk is considerably reduced. Many will tell you that this is because the bodybuilders do not understand proper bench mechanics, and that is probably true to a degree, but the fact is that many powerlifters suffer shoulder injuries in training and competition on the flat bench as well.

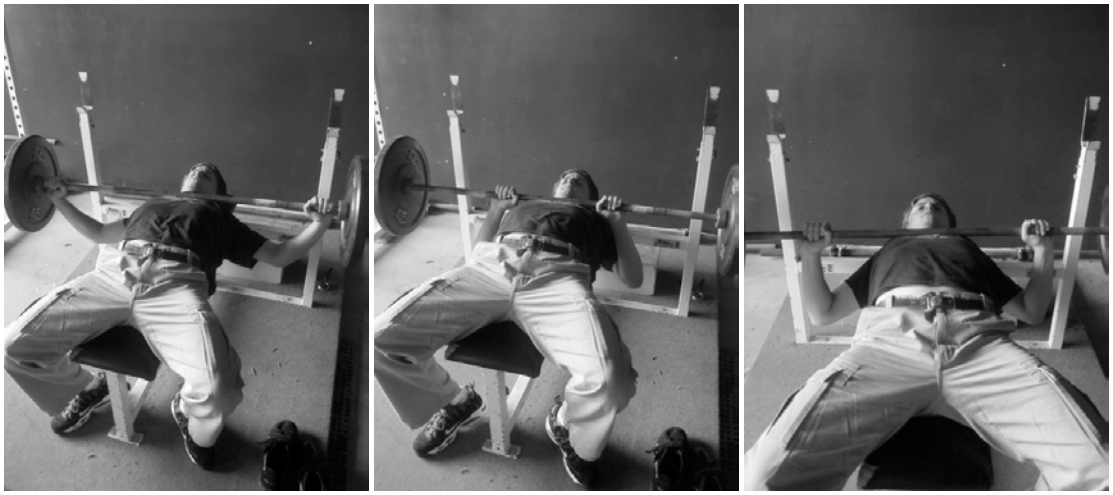
The flat bench need not be avoided as a default, but it is critical to understand a few basic components of a well-executed bench press.

Tightness is key with the bench press. Nothing should be "slacked", the upper back should be firmly pressed into the bench, the lower back slightly arched, and the feet pressed firmly into the floor. It is acceptable to push the balls of the feet into the ground and have your heels up as in a "feet under" style, as well as having your feet flat as in a "feet forward" style.

The shoulders should be tucked behind you. Imagine trying to touch your shoulder blades together on the bench, or if you are versed in anatomy, picture the two scapulae laying flat on the surface of the bench with little space in between them. This changes the movement in terms of how it affects the shoulder, and decreases significantly the risk of injury.

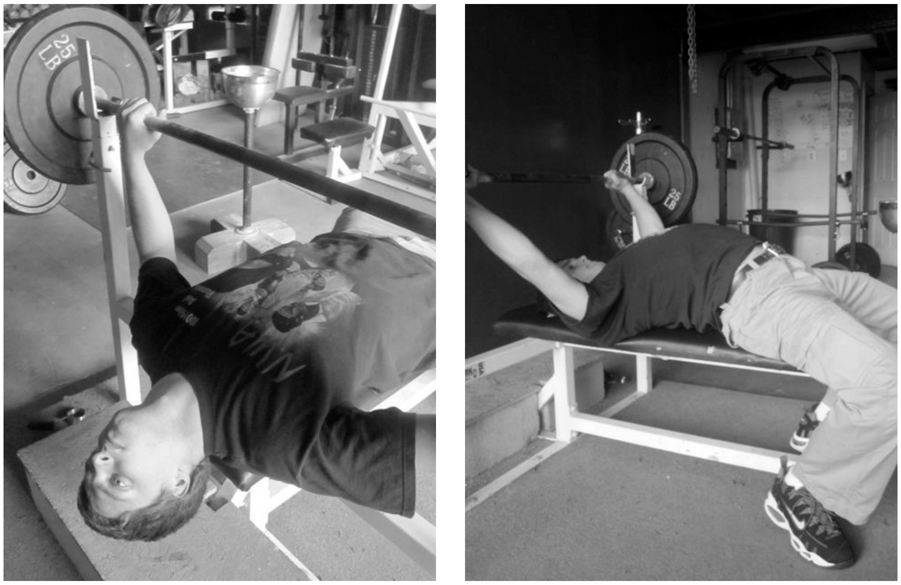
I'll share with you a method I have long used for assuming a correct bench press position and executing a proper bench press.

Lay on the bench with your head hanging over the end. Grip the bar with the desired grip. Grip width will vary, but should result with the forearms being perpendicular with the ground when at the bottom of the movement.



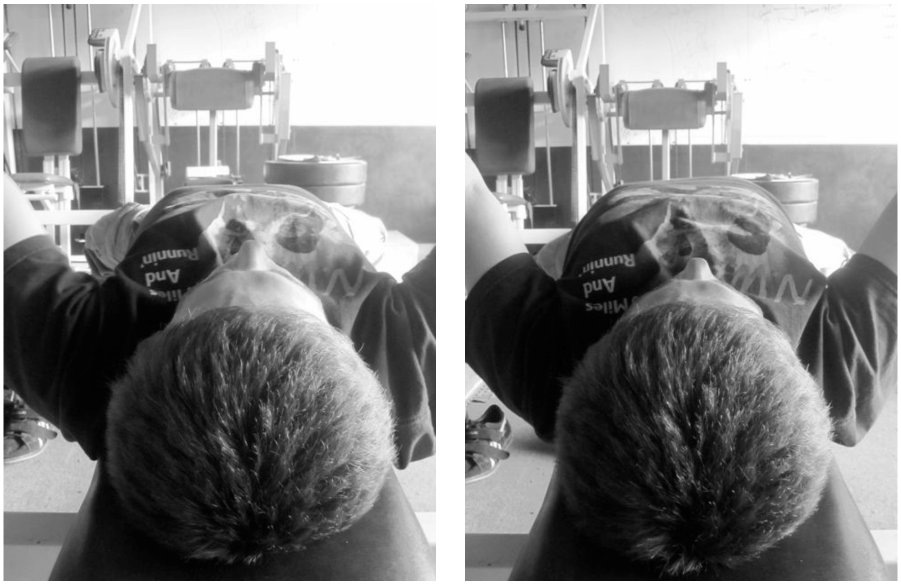
Left to Right: Too wide, too narrow, just right. Note the forearms are perpendicular to the floor when the bar is at the chest.

Plant your feet firmly in the ground. Use the bar to pull yourself down on the bench so that your nose is under the bar in the rack without moving the feet. Done correctly, this will create an arch in the low back, keep your butt on the bench, and create a great deal of tightness in the rest of the body.



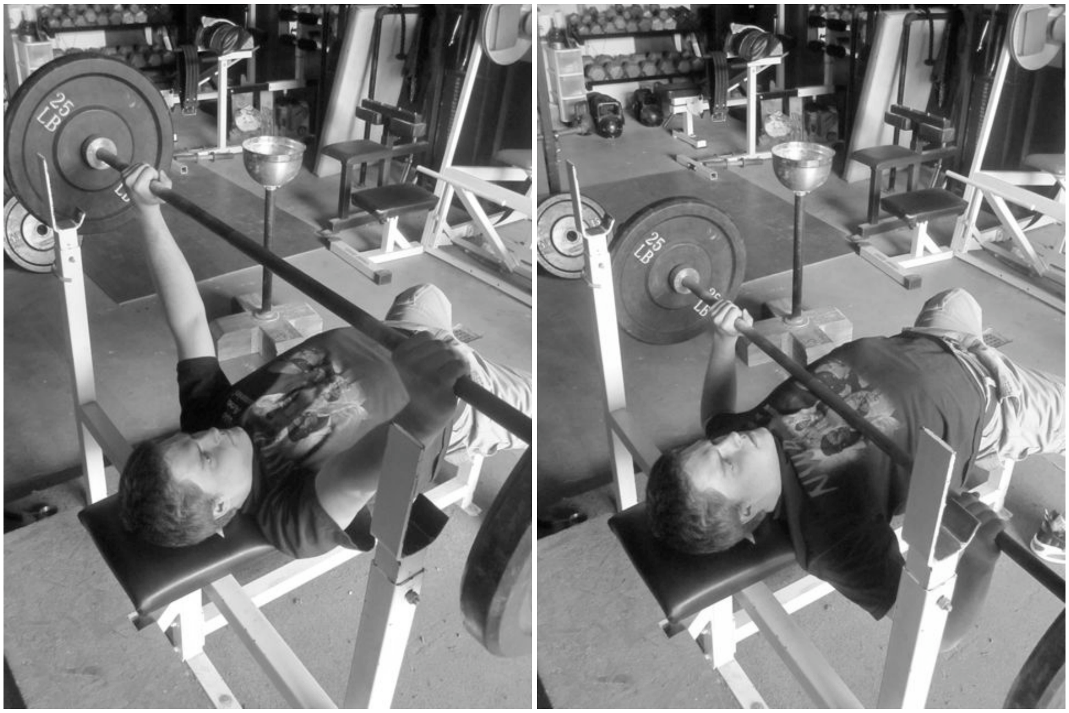
Joe begins by laying on the bench with his head hanging off. His feet are planted firmly and he uses the bar to pull himself down the bench, creating an arch in his lower back.

Once you're there, tuck the shoulders behind you, pushing the chest up towards the sky.



Joe pulls his shoulders together underneath him and pushes his chest to the sky.

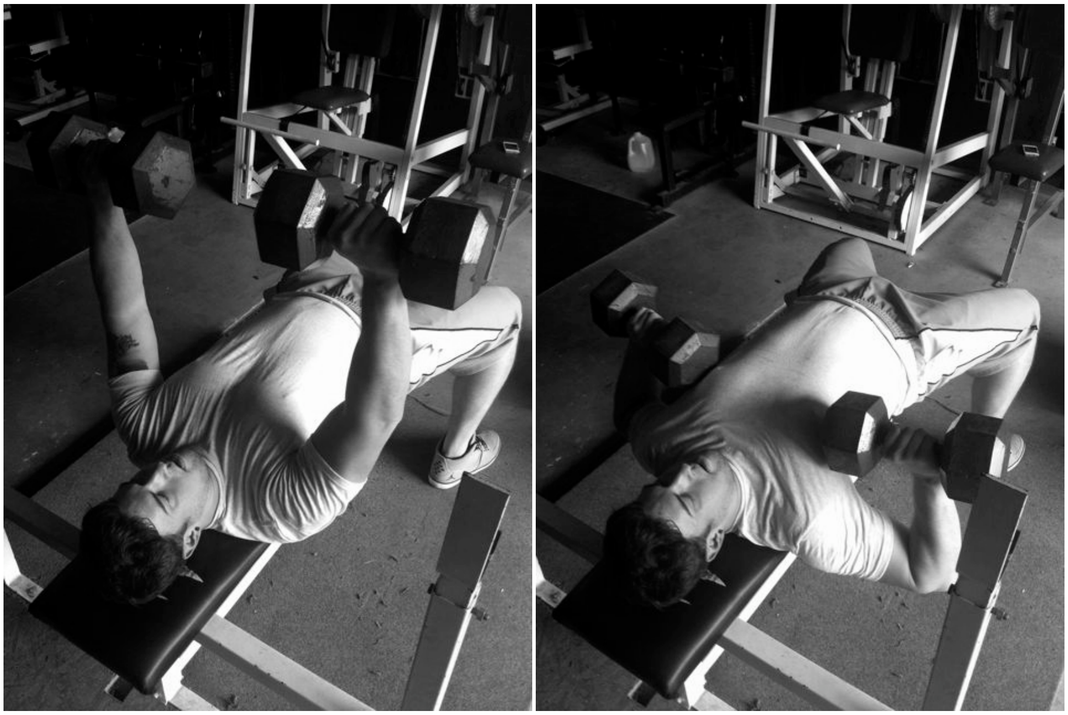
After those simple steps are followed to assume the correct position, have a spotter help you take the bar from the rack and lower it to the chest, touching it slightly, then press the bar to lockout, keeping the shoulders tucked behind you. Breathe only at the top of the movement, as the rule states; never breathe while a bar is moving.



Joe lowers the bar to his chest, touching it gently, before returning the bar to lockout.

There is much more that has been, and can be written on the subject of the bench press. What you have now is enough technique to be dangerous as they say. Applying the ideas presented here will be a solid enough foundation for you to develop a tremendous amount of strength and muscle.

Dumbbell Bench Press



The Dumbbell Bench Press

The mechanics on this one are simple. Setup as you would for a flat, or incline bench press, keeping everything tight and solid on the bench. Lower the dumbbells under control to the outside of the pecs, and then shove them through the ceiling on the way up.

The Incline Bench Press

The incline bench press has been used in the bodybuilding community for decades. Its ability for building strength and muscle is legendary. Many regard it as an inferior lift to the flat bench press, though I thoroughly disagree. It is true that less weight is used in the incline version than the flat in almost every case, but in terms of strength development, weight is not the only variable that matters.

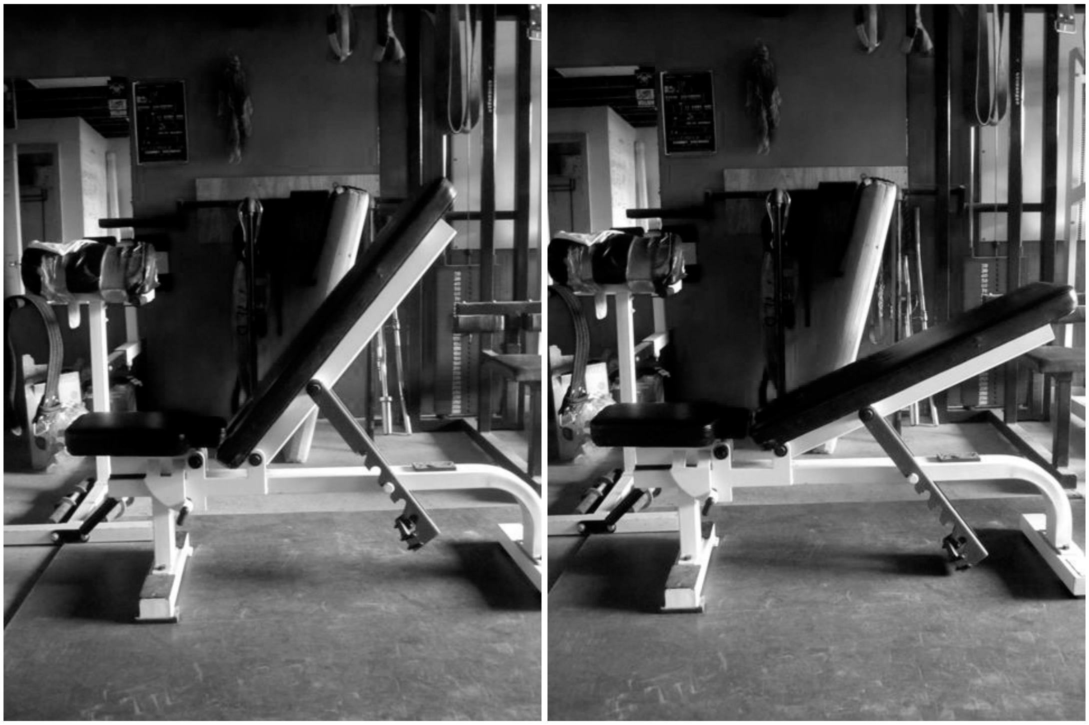
Interestingly enough, in discussion with Bill Starr, strength legend, and author of "The Strongest Shall Survive", he told me that he largely preferred the incline to the flat bench, and only included the latter in his book because at the time most football programs did not yet have access to incline benches. He said that everyone had benches, even if they were the locker room variety, and could therefore perform the flat bench. He was speaking to his audience.

Bodybuilders prefer the incline (and decline) bench press to the flat due to the dramatic reduction in shoulder injuries seen with the former methods.

The flat bench is certainly an effective lift, but it is by no means the only bench press version worth mentioning in this book, or applying in your strength-training program.

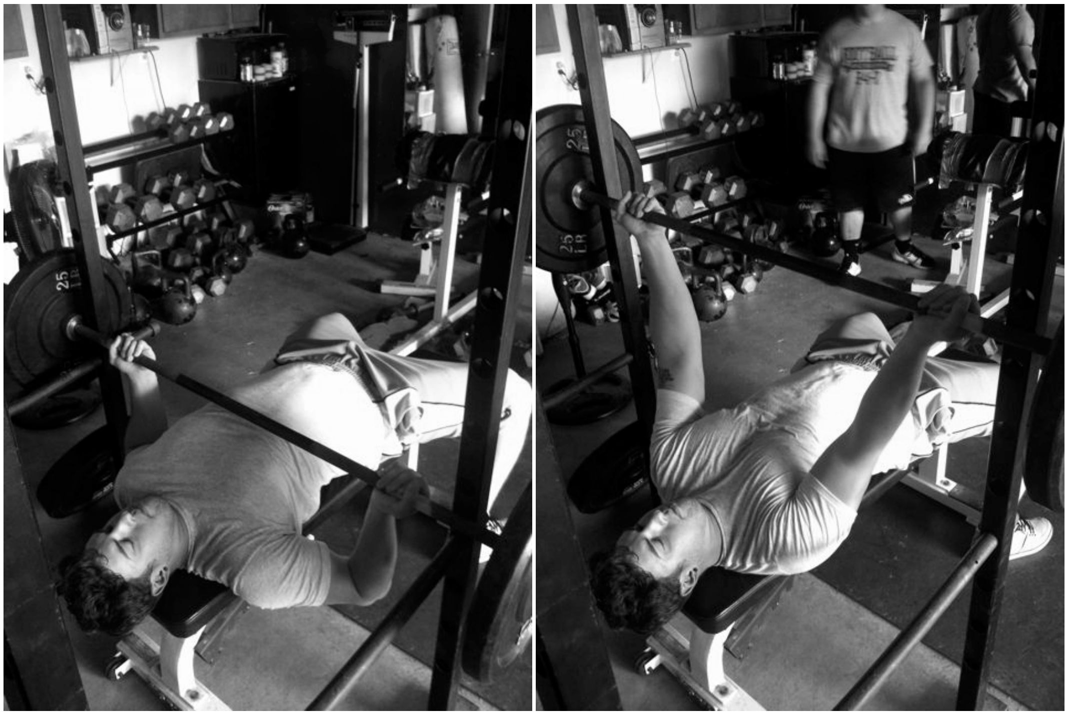
The incline bench requires significantly less "technique" than the flat bench. Tucking the shoulders behind you is ideal in the movement still, but far from necessary. Most all who attempt the incline bench press will perform what I would consider an effective repetition on their first try.

Many incline benches are set at a fixed angle. If selecting one of these from a variety, I prefer a shallow incline to a steeper incline. If you are using an adjustable bench, opt for something a step or two above flat. Forty-five degrees is a bit steep for me, but honestly, I still prefer it to the flat bench.



An adjustable Incline Bench. The left photo shows an incline that is too steep for my liking. The right photo is just right.

The Reverse Grip Bench Press



The Reverse Grip Bench Press

This is one that many may not have seen before. This is very easy to do on a Smith Machine, however, if you are a typical garage gym trainee, you can use your rack just as well. Simply set your bench up inside the cage as shown. You will need to slide it down a bit more than you would to bench press. Start at the bottom with the bar on the rails sitting just off of your chest. With a reverse grip, push the bar up, sliding it against the rack (a little bit of graphite or other lube on the cage where the bar contacts it makes it a bit smoother). Lower it under control, marinating contact with the rack on the way down.

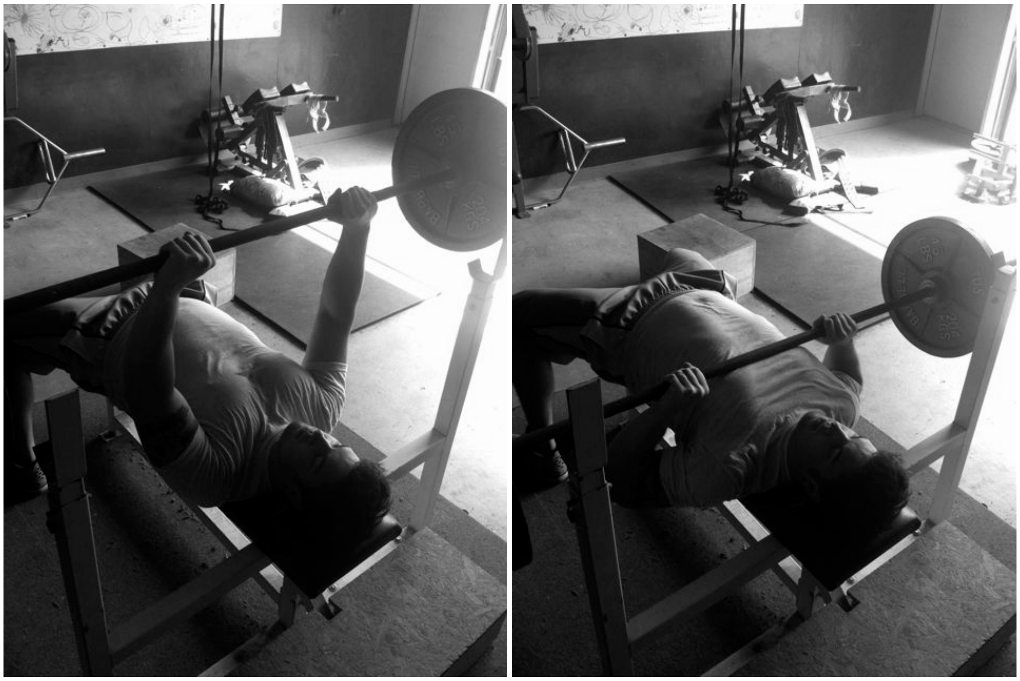
The Close Grip Bench Press

The close-grip is another go-to favorite of mine for myself and others. The lift is much easier on the shoulders than the standard bench press, and therefore is a favorite amongst older lifters, athletes, and anyone else whose shoulders are of great importance.

The training effect of the close-grip is very similar to that of the flat bench press (the decline and incline versions can also be performed with a close grip). The chest, shoulders, and triceps are all heavily involved in the movement as they are in the standard bench, despite the classification that many have of the close grip as a tricep exercise exclusively.

There are two basic variations to the close grip bench press. There is the more "powerlifting" friendly version which involves having the upper arms remain in contact and "rub" the torso throughout the lift (a movement which resembles the action of a shirted bench press), and the "bodybuilding" version which involves letting the elbows "do what they want" and drift out a bit. Both styles work well, though I am more of a fan of the "bodybuilding" style, even for those for whom strength is number one priority.

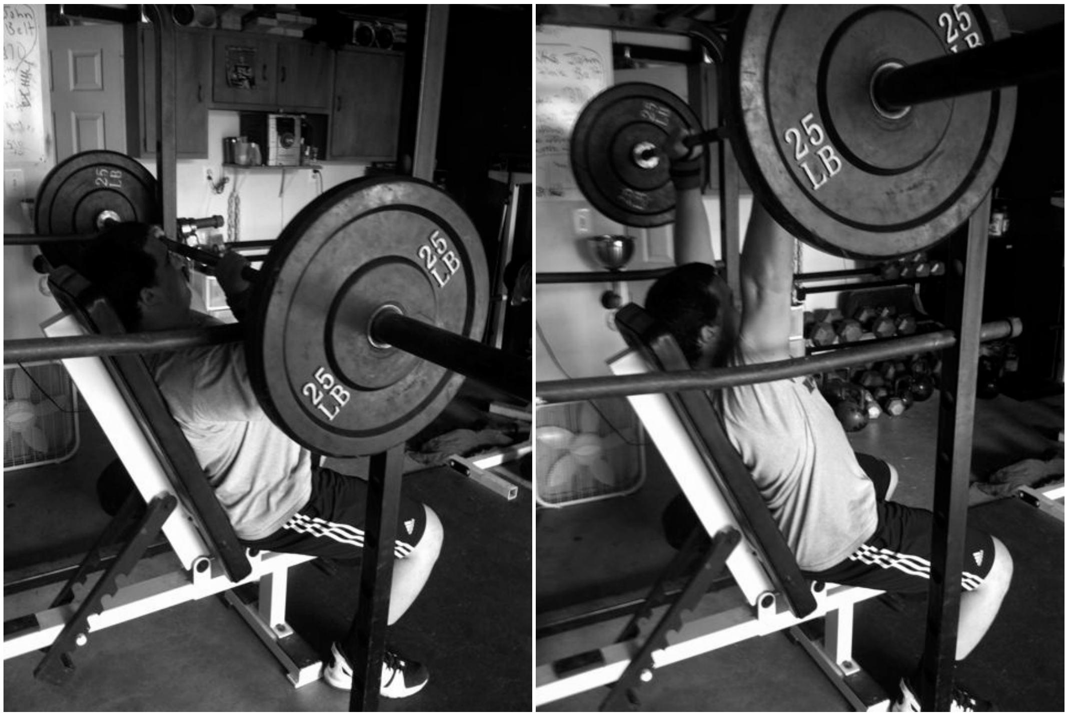
Spacing of the hands is simple in the close grip. The grip should be virtually identical to the grip used for the press. Oh, and like the other pressing movements, don't be an ass, put your thumb around the bar.



The Close Grip Bench Press

Steep Incline Close Grip Bench Press

This one gets setup similar to the reverse grip bench press in that you are inside the cage, and the bar starts on the rails. Set your incline bench to the steepest incline that you can use without being in an upright position. Space your hands on the bar in your pressing grip, and push the bar from the uprights to lockout explosively. Lower the bar under control, emphasizing the negative. Do not rest the bar on the rails in the bottom; simply make contact with the rails, and repeat the motion until your set is complete. Any resting takes place in the locked out position.

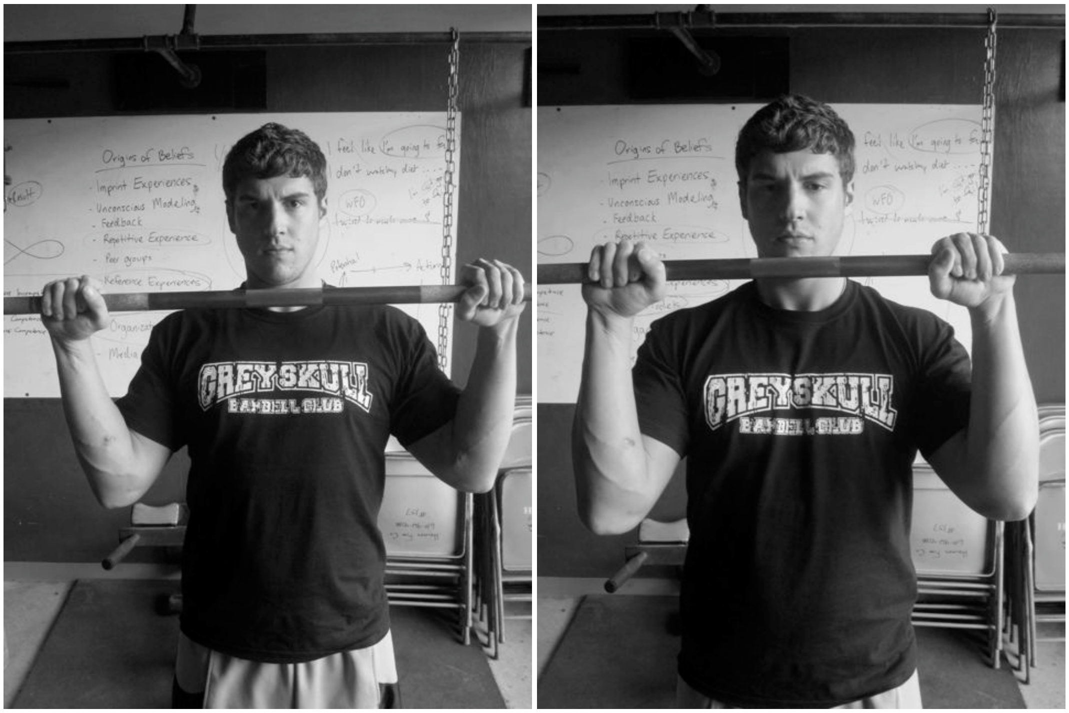


The Steep Incline Close Grip Bench Press

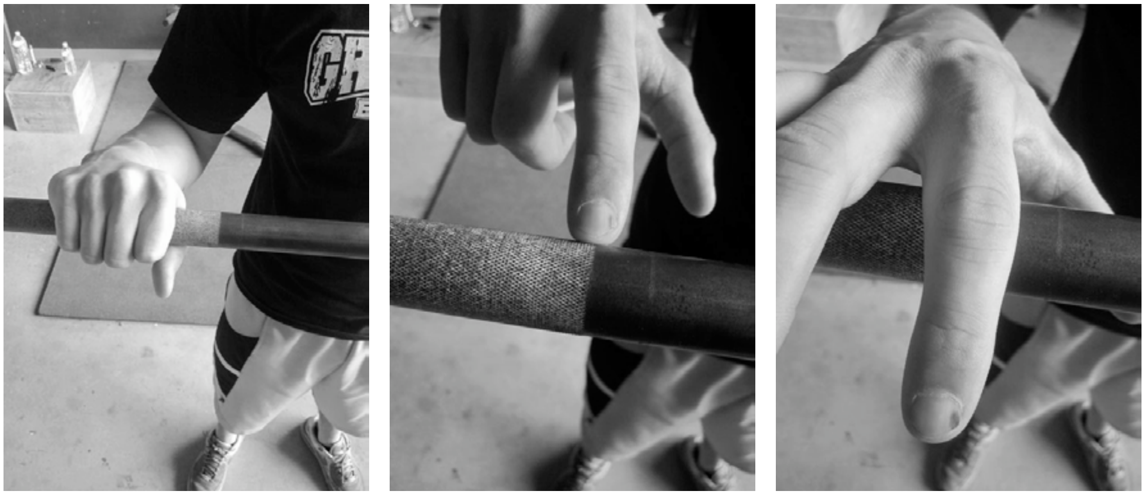
The Press

The press and the deadlift are arguably the simplest barbell lifts in theory. The idea of putting things over one's head I imagine has existed since people started picking things up. Few lifts produce the strength and muscular development benefits that the press is capable of when performed correctly.

Performing the press is simple. The first step is determining the proper grip. A correct pressing grip will have the forearms oriented perpendicular to both the ground and the bar when viewed from the front. For many males, this will involve placing the index fingers on the line where the smooth portion of the bar meets the knurling. It is critical that the wrists stay locked throughout the movement. The wrists should not be extended at all during any portion of the lift.

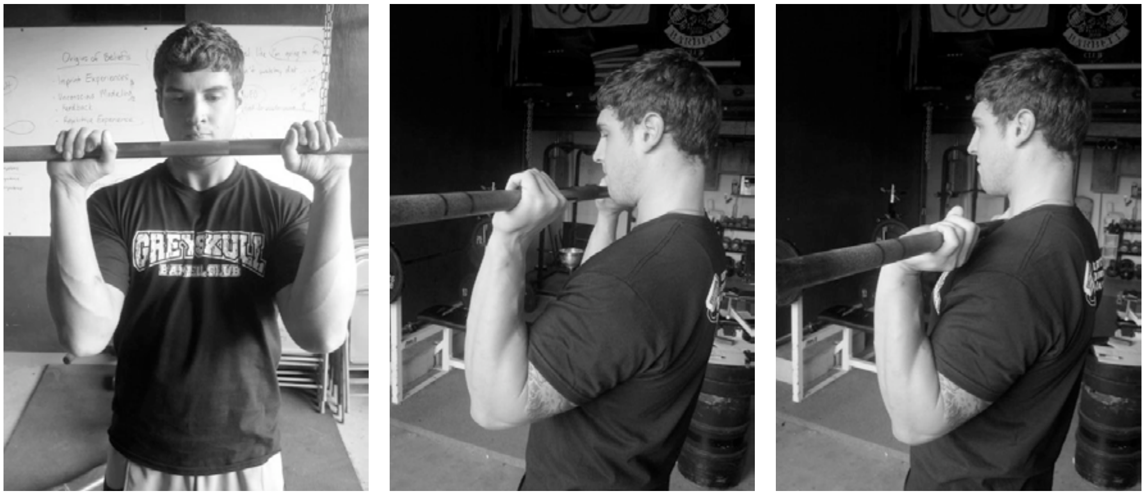


The first photo shows Devin taking a grip that is too wide. The second shows a grip that has the forearms perpendicular to both the bar, and the floor. This is a recurring theme in my teaching of the barbell lifts. Note Devin's size in these photos compared to the more recent ones seen in this book. These were taken prior to his gaining roughly 50 lbs using the methods outlined in this book.



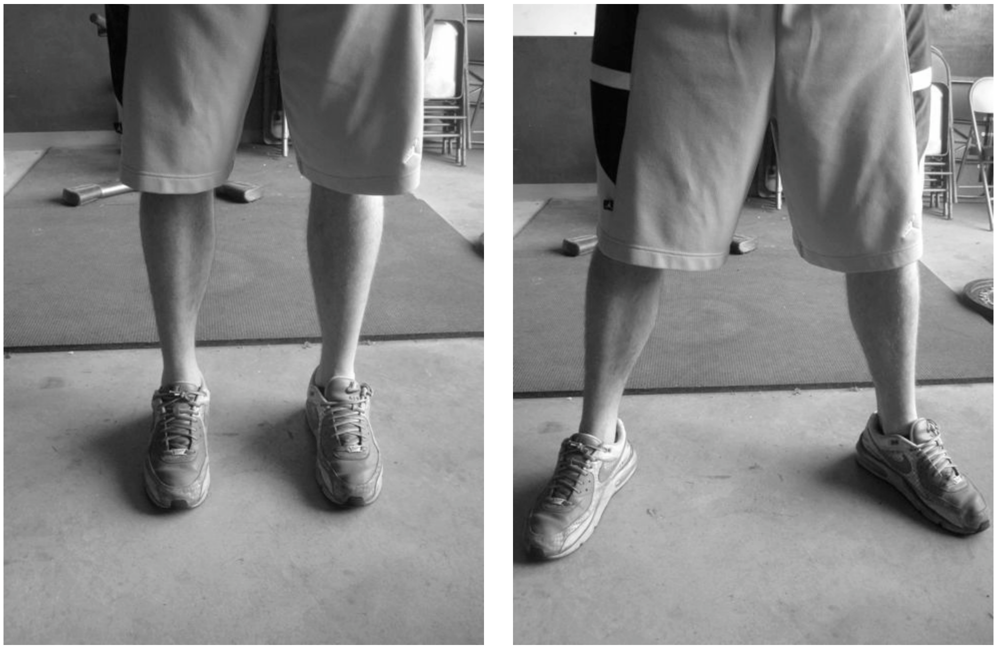
Devin illustrates a grip that is too wide in the rack. In the second photo he is indicating the point where the knurling of the bar meets the smooth; this is where most will place their index fingers to have correct grip spacing. Note: For reference, Devin is six foot four inches tall. If you are five foot eight inches, there is no possible way that your grip needs to be wider than his.

The chest should be flexed hard, which will in turn contract the lats and “tighten the armpits” creating a shelf that the triceps will rest on at the beginning, and bounce off of on the latter reps. Resting the triceps on this shelf will place the elbows in front of the body, but still pointed towards the ground. There is no need for the bar to touch the chest or collarbone area, as some will have you believe. One of the most common faults that I correct in lifters in the press is the resultant loss of tightness due to the perceived belief that it is necessary for the bar to rest on the front of the shoulders or the chest.



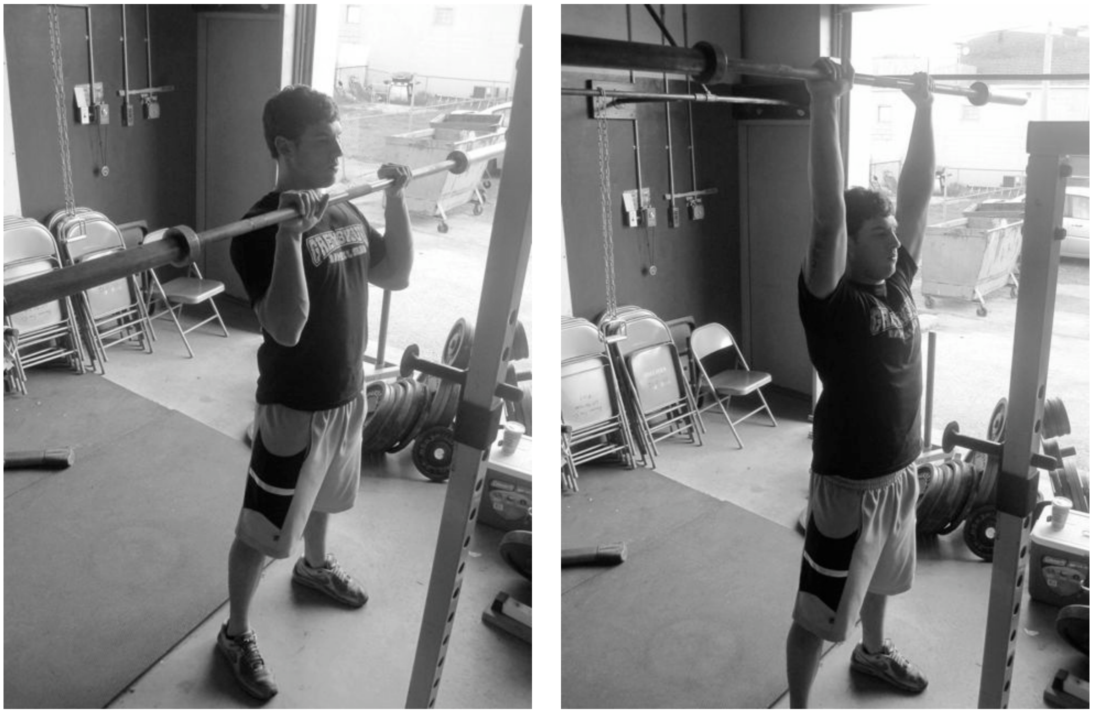
Flexing the chest to create the lat shelf. In the second photo, Devin is maintaining a straight wrist and allowing the bar to sit where it wants to, several inches off of his chest. Note the position of the elbow in the third picture when Devin relaxes the wrists in order to allow the bar to touch the chest. The erroneous belief that the bar needs to touch the body leads to a loosening of the entire supportive platform.

The stance should be the same as the squat, a bit wider than most tend to stand naturally when attempting the movement.



In the left photo Devin demonstrates a stance that is too narrow. In the photo on the right he takes his squat stance, the appropriate stance for the Press.

The first rep is performed by taking a giant breath in and holding it in before shoving the bar to lockout over the head. Once the bar is locked out, the breath is released slightly, a new breath is taken and the bar is lowered quickly but under control in order to “bounce” off of the shelf created by the lats for the next rep. To make this effect more pronounced, I instruct lifters to imagine performing a “pec-dec flye” throughout the movement, both on the way up, and the way down. This kinesthetic modeling creates the tightness needed to effectively use the upper body musculature synergistically, and move the weight efficiently.

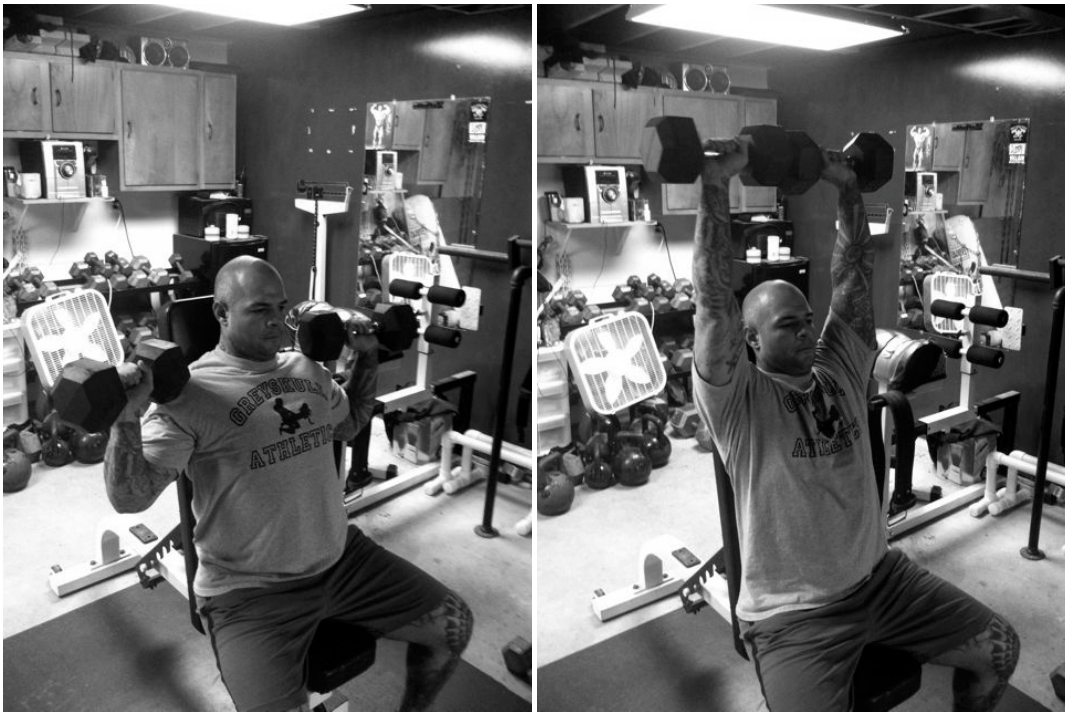


The Press

A pause is appropriate if deemed necessary at the top of the movement, but never at the bottom. After the first rep is performed, all subsequent reps begin at the top (think squat instead of deadlift). As always, no breathing occurs while the bar is in motion.

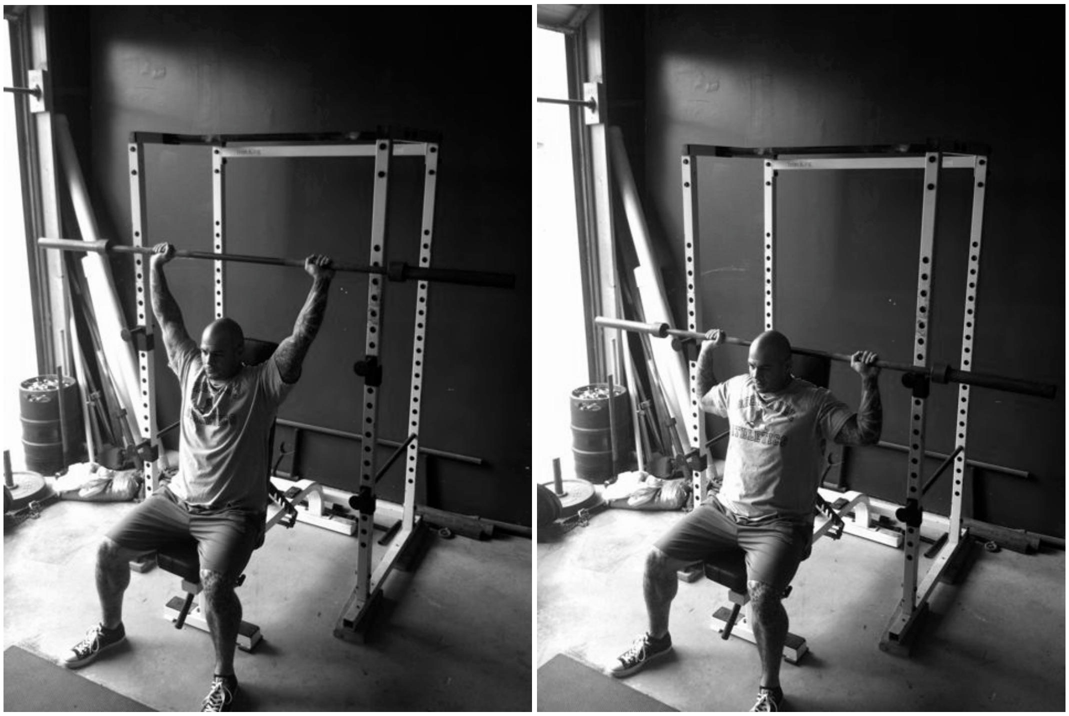
Seated Dumbbell Press

Another simple one.



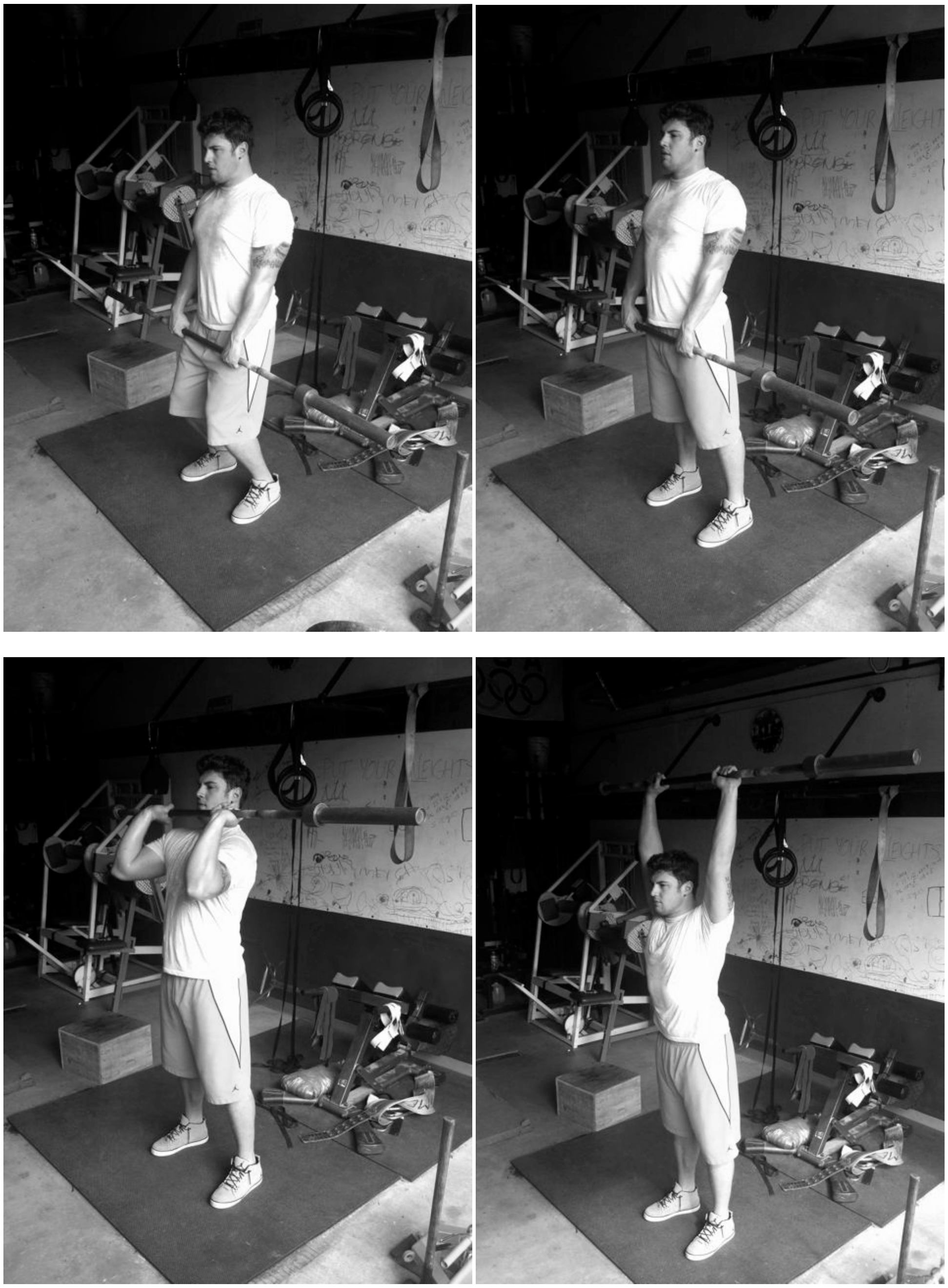
The Seated Dumbbell Press

Seated Behind the Neck Press



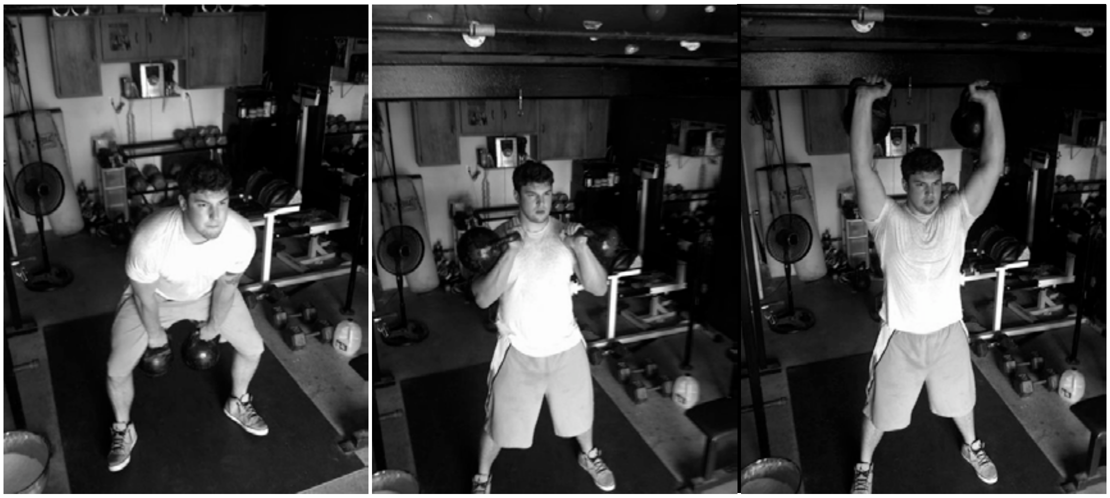
The Seated Behind the Neck Press with a barbell. Note that Tommy is only lowering the bar to ear level. Also notice his hand spacing on the bar.

Barbell Hang Clean and Press



The Barbell Hang Clean and Press

Kettlebell Clean and Press



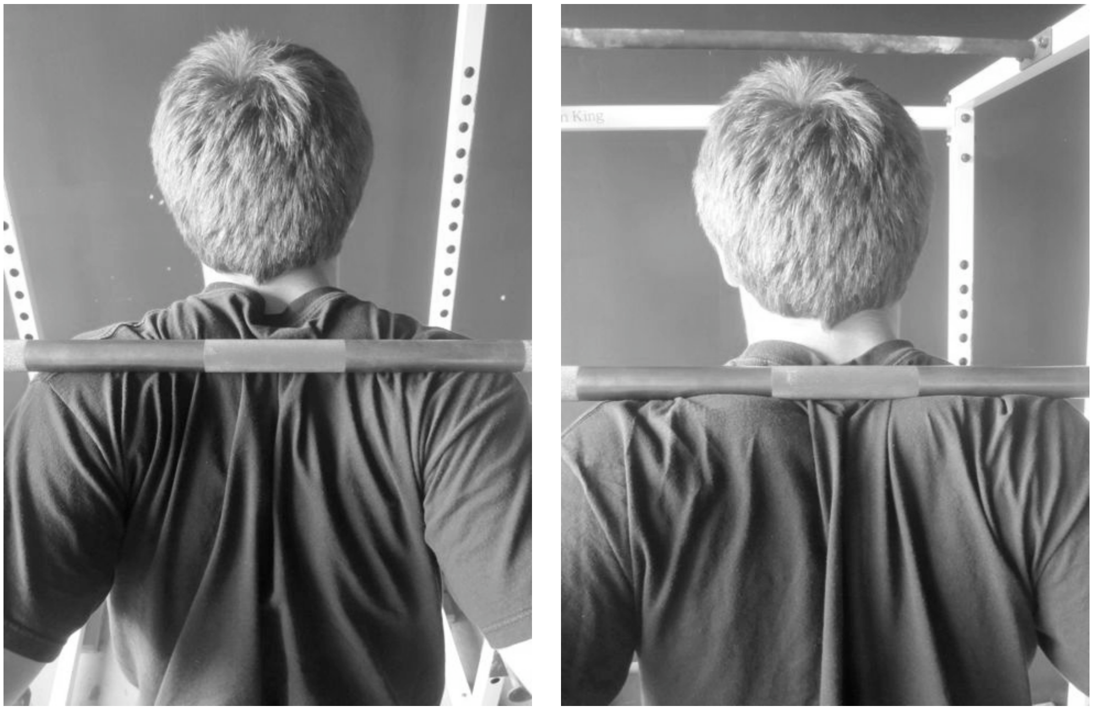
The Kettlebell Clean and Press

The Squat

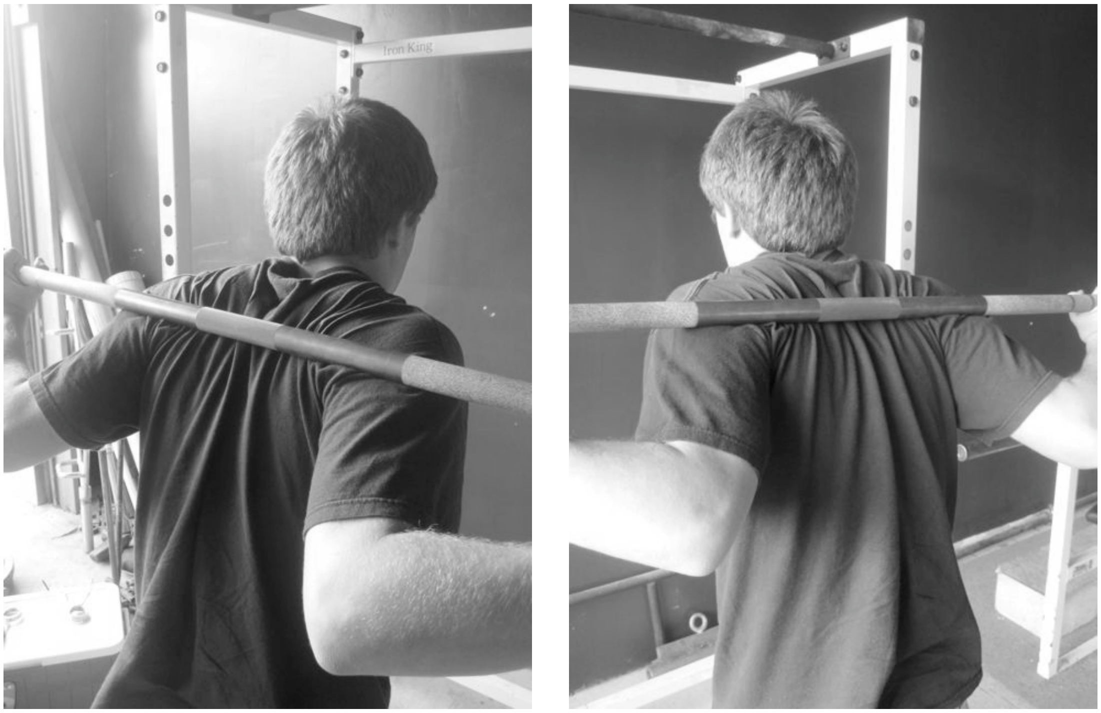
The Squat has long been regarded as the King of all Barbell lifts. It is without a doubt one of the most effective lifts in terms of building strength and muscle mass, the latter being dependent on the other variables necessary for growth being in place. It is a vital component of a well-designed strength-training program, and it is my opinion that all able-bodied individuals who endeavor to acquire more strength should be squatting.

I feel that people commonly make teaching the squat significantly harder than it really is. I have developed a very simple method for teaching the squat that I have had tremendous success implementing with new trainees, and even experienced trainees who were grossly over thinking the movement prior.

With the bar placed on the back in a position that is comfortable for the lifter (as shown below) the lifter assumes a stance that will facilitate a proper squat. There will be a great deal of variance in terms of foot placement from person to person based on a variety of anthropometrical factors. There are however some “constant” characteristics of a good squat stance that can be modeled to shorten the learning curve.



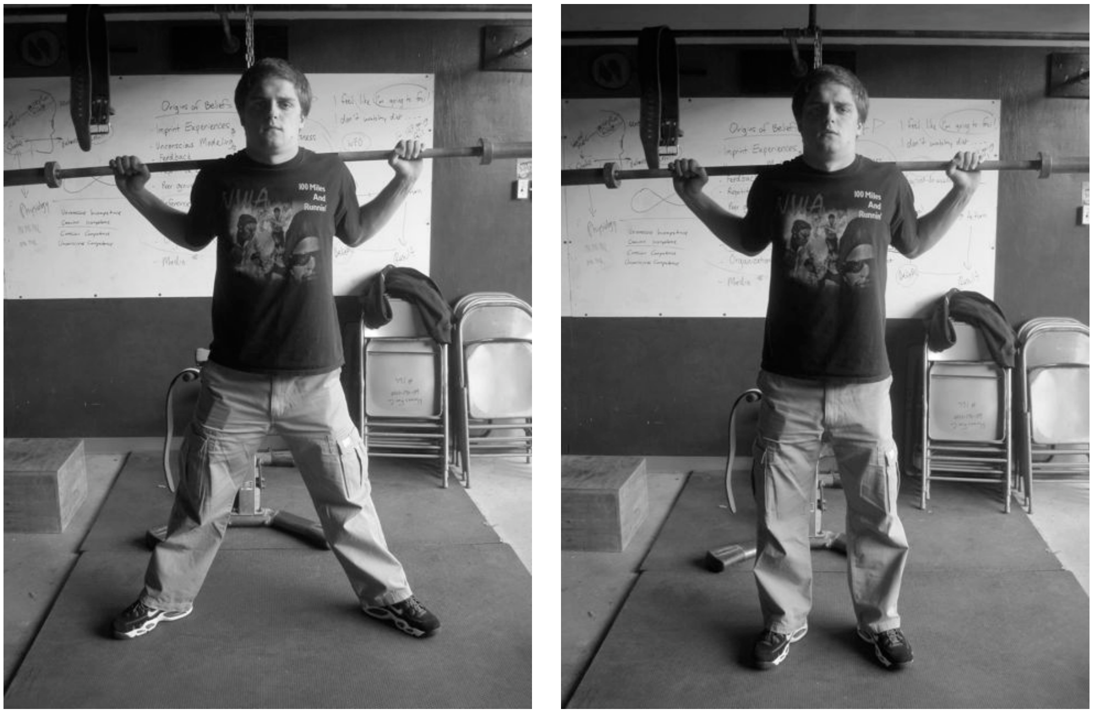
The two major “styles” of bar placement; the “low-bar” on the left, and the “high-bar” on the right. Either method is acceptable in my book, and the rest of the movement remains the same from a teaching and execution standpoint. Squatting produces result, period. A prime example of minutia b.s. Impeding one’s progress is the nonsensical belief that a two-inch difference in the placement of the bar on one’s back determines whether or not the movement is effective.



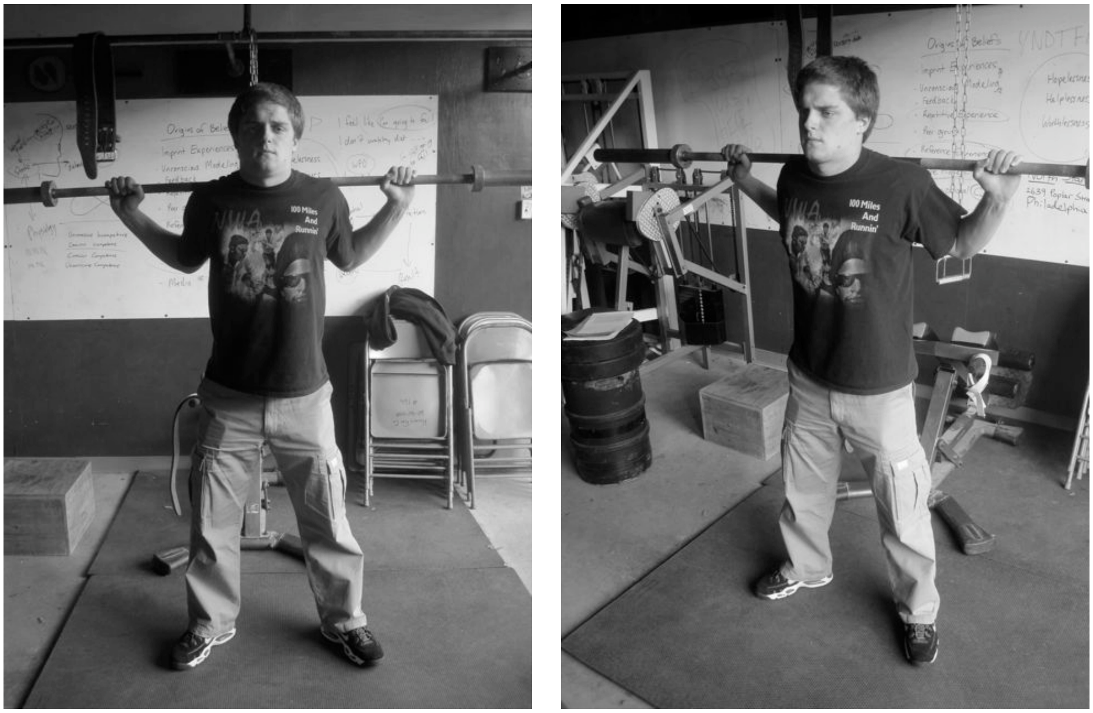
An over-zealous "low-bar" squat. Here the bar is too low, and is resting on the back of the arms. This is incredibly common with the "thumbs on top" method of holding the bar. Your elbows will hate you for attempting this.

For one, the feet will be turned out slightly. We aren't going to break out the protractors here and determine an angle, largely because of the great deal of variance in angle from person to person, instead we are going to instruct the lifter to turn his or her feet out slightly, and then let them surprise us with how much innate ability they have to position their own skeleton in a manner that will best allow it to move and function effectively.

Spacing of the feet will vary as well, however, placing the heels roughly under the shoulders will work for the overwhelming majority of the population, male or female.

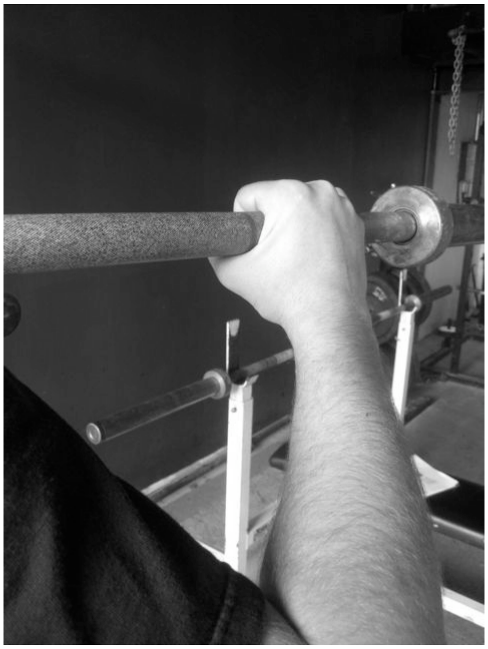


On the left we see Joe assuming a stance that is too wide. On the right we see a stance that is too narrow. In both we see a fly-ass NWA shirt.

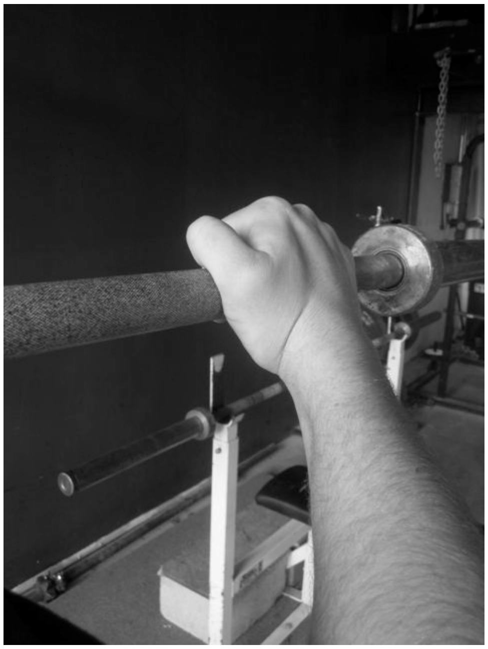


In the above images we see Joe in a stance that is just about right for him. Note the angle of his feet and the placement of his heels roughly under his shoulders.

Once we have the bar placed on the back with the hands around the bar (where it will be our instinct to place them) and we have assumed a proper squat stance, we are ready for the rest of the method.



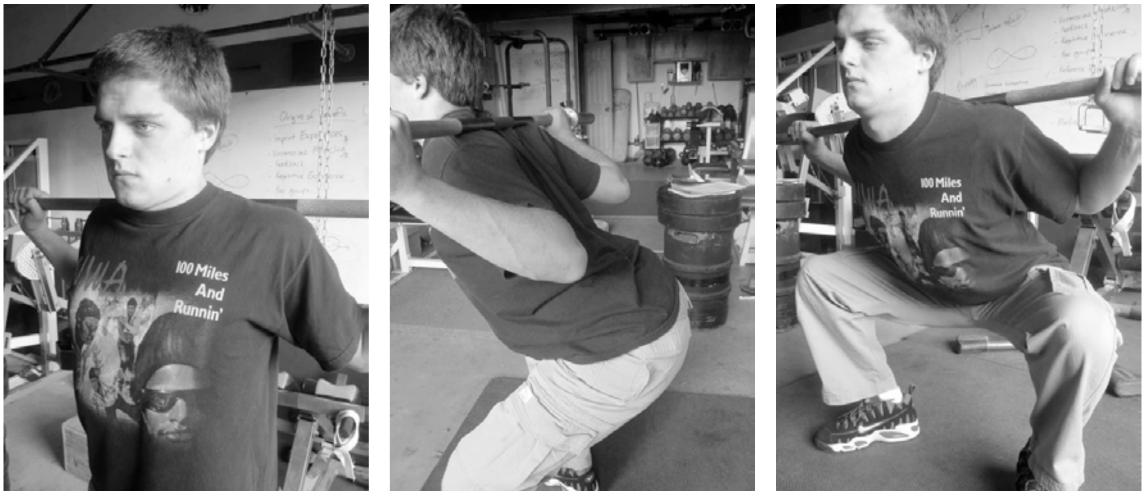
Do this



Never this

This method is practiced by performing the following three tasks simultaneously:

1. Push the chest out as hard as you can,
2. Push the butt straight back as hard as you can
3. Push the knees out laterally as hard as you can



Chest out, Butt out, Knees out!

If all three of those tasks are accomplished simultaneously throughout the duration of the movement, the squat will always be performed in balance, with the bar riding in a prefect groove over the center of the foot.

The Front Squat

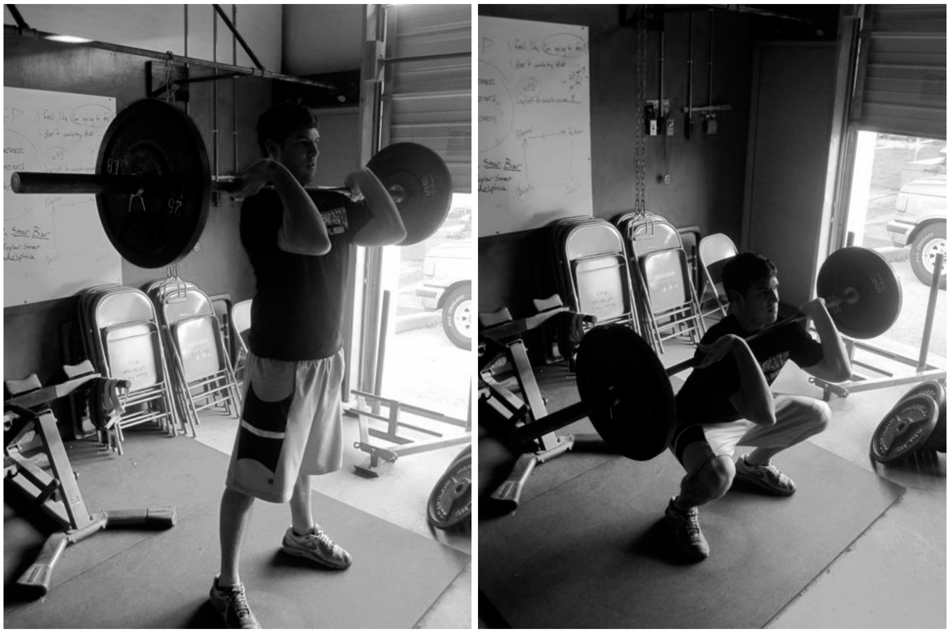
The front squat is a very effective tool for building strength, and muscle, particularly in the quads and glutes. The lift has long been a staple in Olympic Weightlifting programs, its obvious application in that instance being the development of the specific strength necessary to stand up with a heavy clean before the clean and press. It has also been used extensively in the bodybuilding community for decades as a quad-blasting squat variant.

No matter the variation of the front squat, the results are always solid.

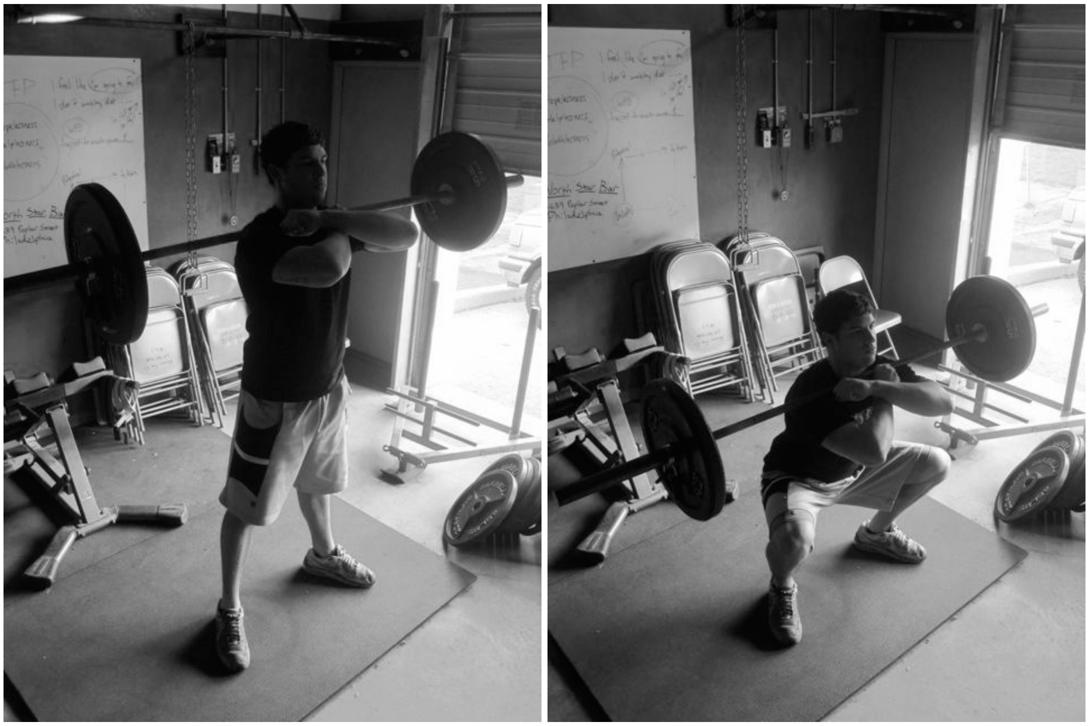
The "Olympic" front squat, as we will call it, is performed by holding the barbell in the "rack" position of the clean and then performing a squat.

The bodybuilding style front squat is performed by crossing the arms in front of the body as shown below, elbows out, hands in fists touching opposite shoulders. This creates a shelf to rest the bar on. The bodybuilding style is simpler to perform correctly, though it requires that the bar be taken out of a rack or off of a stand. The Olympic style does not require a rack, as the bar can be cleaned into place.

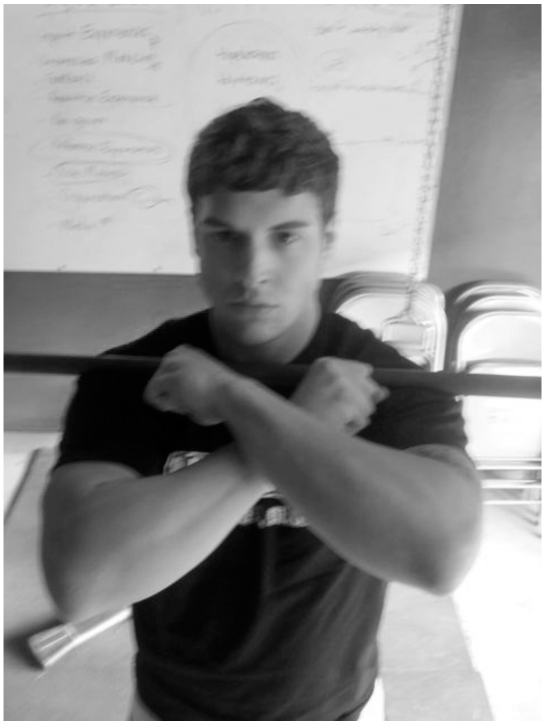
Both styles have their applications. I feel no obligation to recommend the Olympic style front squat to anyone other than those interested in competing in the sport. In terms of building strength and muscle, the bodybuilding variation will certainly get the job done.



The "Olympic" style Front Squat



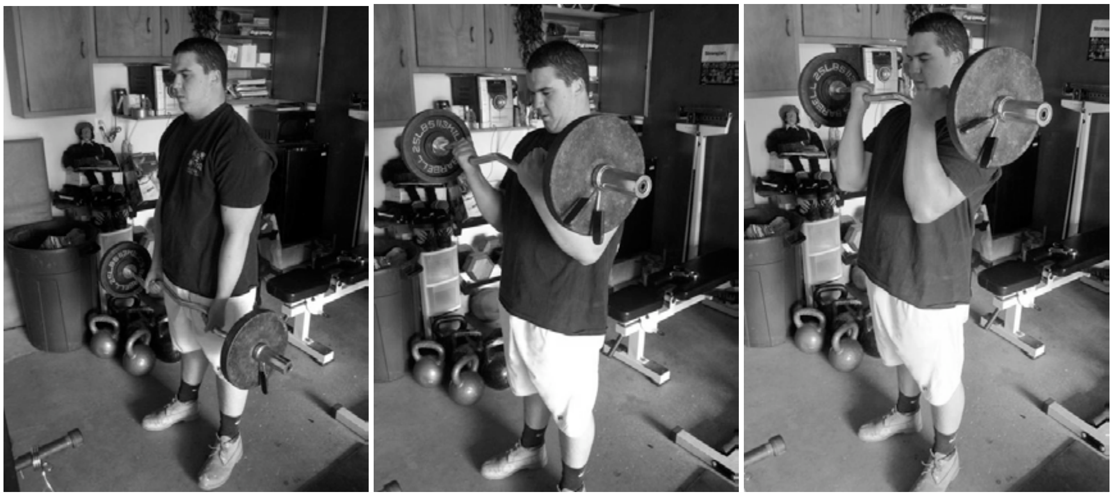
The "Bodybuilding" style Front Squat



Detail on Bar Position; Keep those elbows out!

EZ Curl Bar Curl

Make everything as tight as possible when doing these. Flex your chest and lats hard throughout the whole movement. If you haven't learned how to consciously control these muscles, just imagine holding a pair of five-pound plates under your armpits while you perform the movement. Maintain this tightness at the top of the movement and lift your elbows up slightly at the end; you'll feel the whole unit get much tighter, and the bicep itself will feel as if it has no more potential to contract (which it won't). This small movement triggers the last little bit of contraction from the biceps proximal (closest to the body) function of contributing to the movement of the upper arm at the shoulder joint.



The EZ Curl Bar Curl. Note the squeeze and elevated elbows at the top of the movement.

The EZ Curl Bar Drag Curl

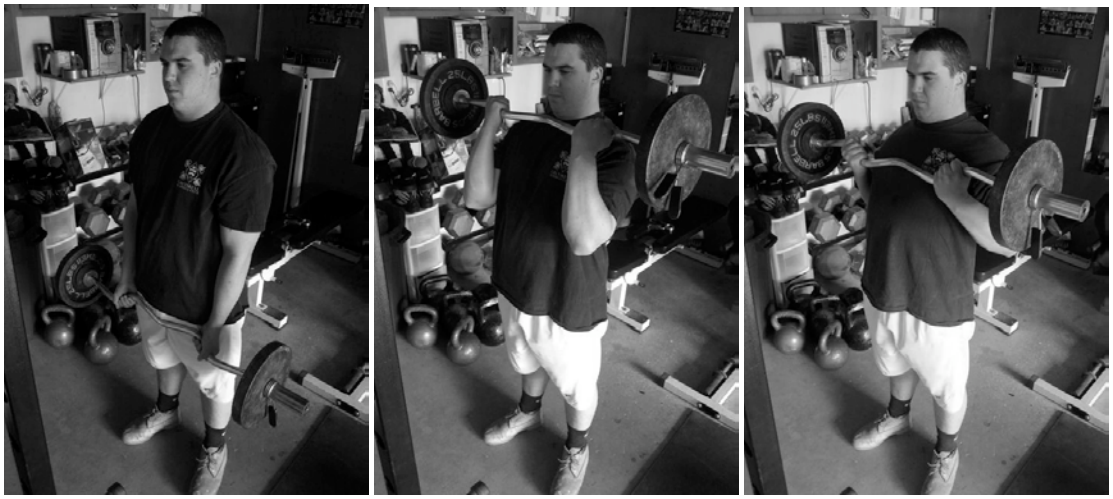
This variation of the standard curl described above is one of my favorites. When done right, it provides one of the nastiest negatives you can create

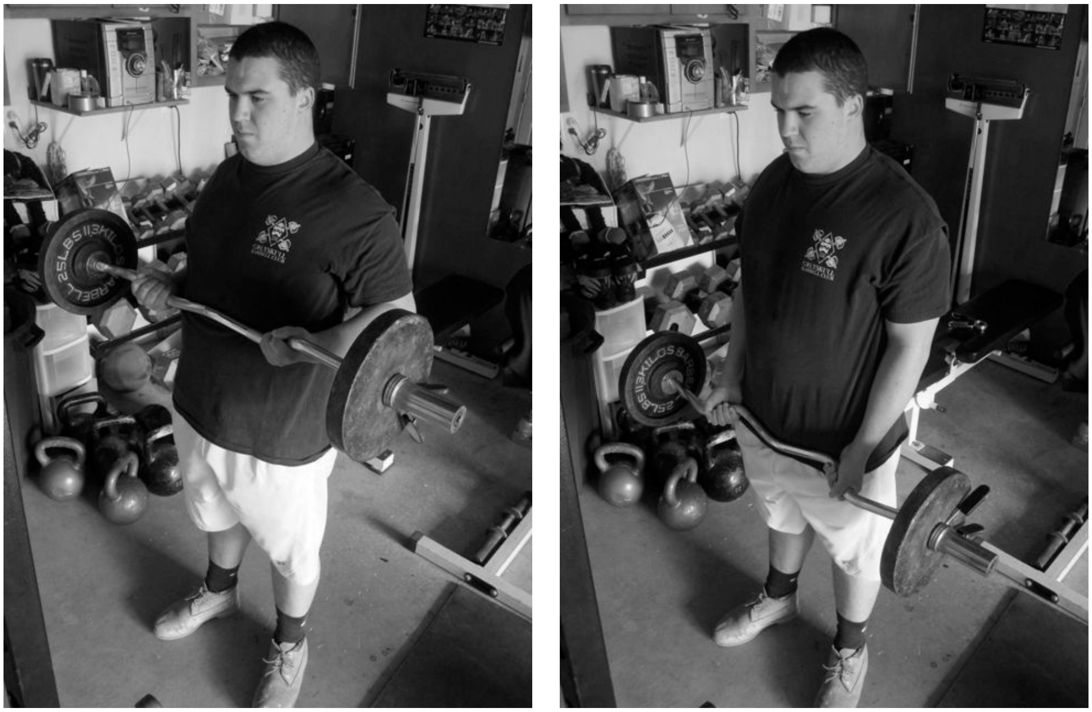
The concentric portion is the same as the normal curl.

On the negative portion, shoot your elbows back behind you, keeping your arms squeezed in tight to your sides, until the bar is touching the front of your torso (where it comes in contact with you will depend on individual limb segment lengths).

You then perform the negative by sliding the bar down the front of your body to the start position.

Ease into these, and remember that the movement is to be performed strict, and with a ton of tension throughout your entire body.

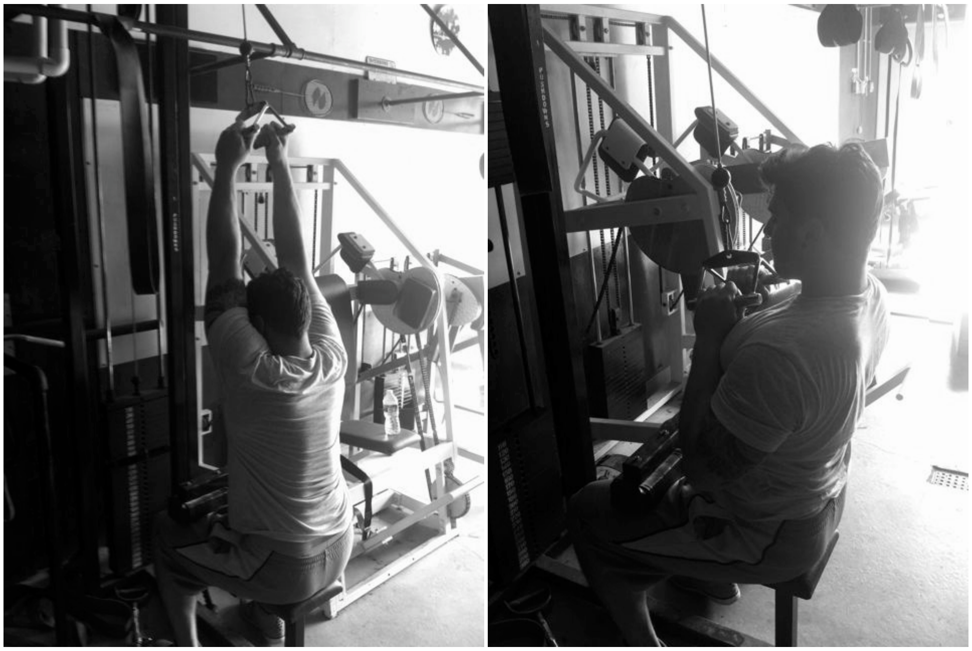


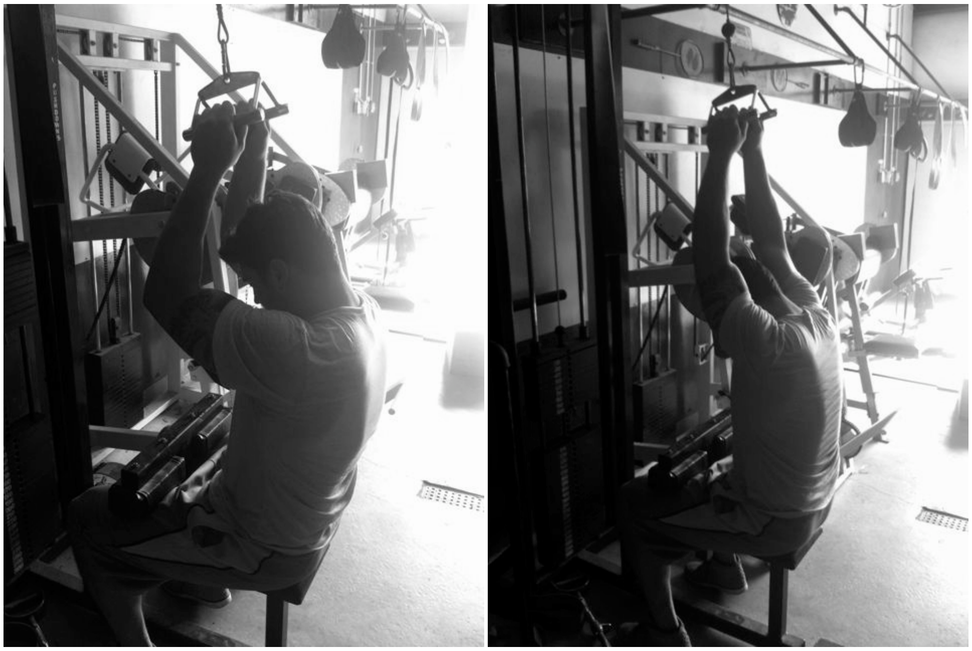


The EZ Curl Bar Drag Curl

The V-Handle Pulldown

Sit upright in the seat with legs locked. Lock the lower back in extension, and push your chest out hard (it stays this way throughout). Reach until your shoulders are pulled up (as in a dead hang pull-up) and pull the handle down to your upper chest, driving with your elbows and thinking of your hands as hooks. Use straps preferably, but just say no to momentum.

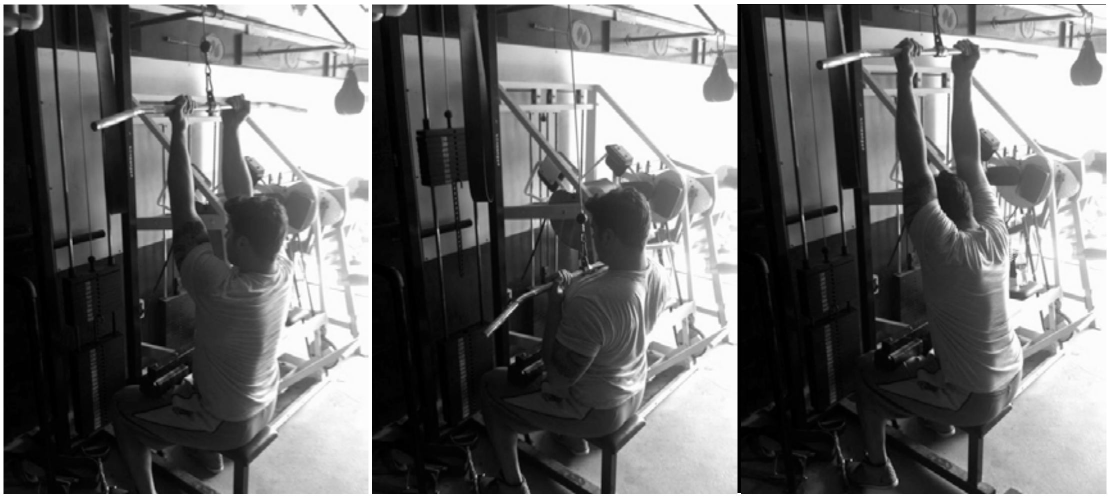




The V-Handle Pulldown

Notice that when Devin completes the negative portion of the movement, returning the handle to the top, he rounds his back and allows the best stretch possible to the lats. Stretch equals growth here.

Close Grip Pulldown

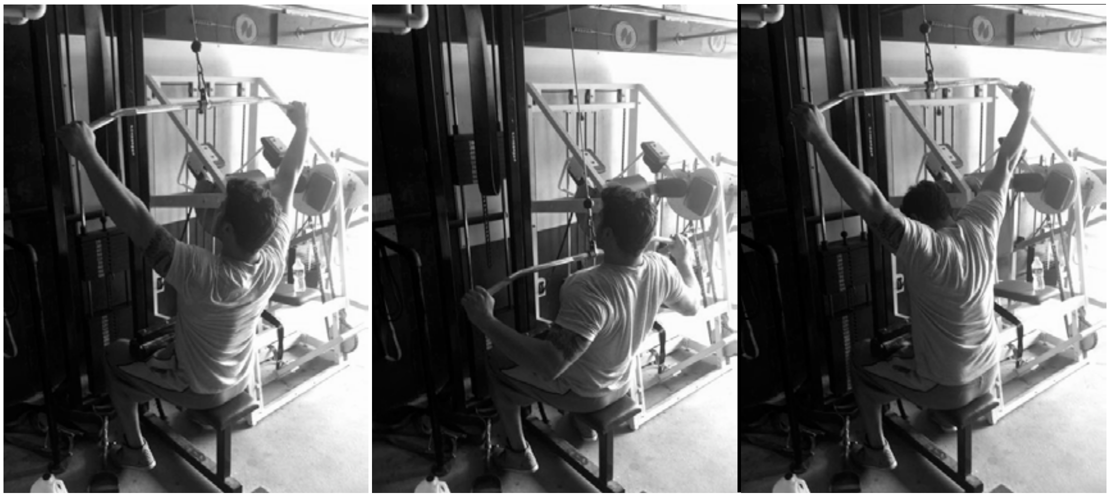


The Close Grip Pulldown

This one is performed exactly like the V-Handle variation, except that the hands are in the same position that they would be in for a close-grip chin-up.

Wide Grip Pulldown

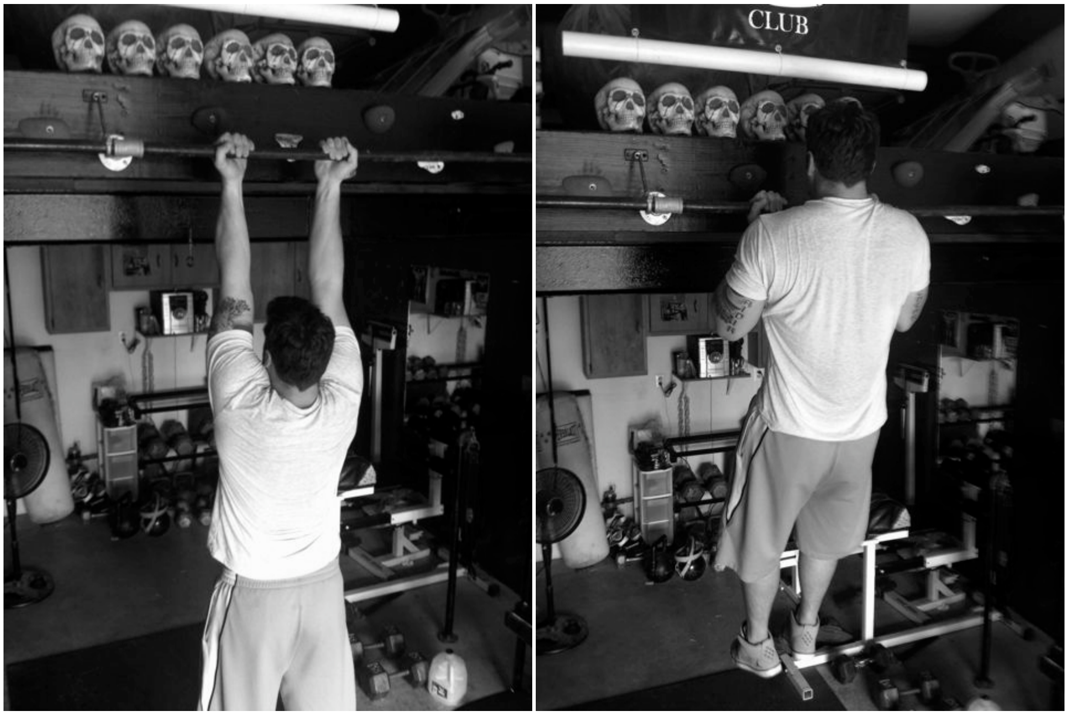
This one is my least favorite of the Pulldown movements due to its limited range of motion in the lats, the targeted muscle group. This one is effective however to bridge a gap where progress has slowed on one of the other movements.



The Wide Grip Pulldown

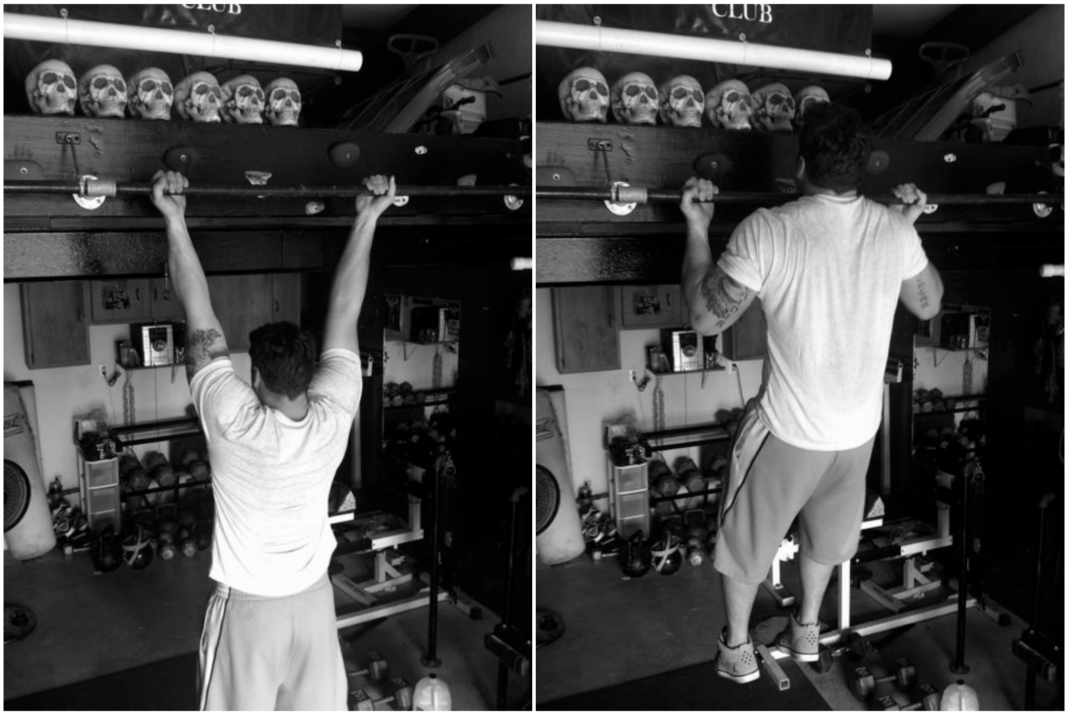
Close Grip Chin Up

All of these chin-up variations are pretty self-explanatory. The emphasis is on the negative, deliberately slowing it down, and on the act of touching the throat to the bar on the positive portion of the exercise.



The Close Grip Chin Up

Wide Grip Chin Up



Wide Grip Chin Up

The Deadlift

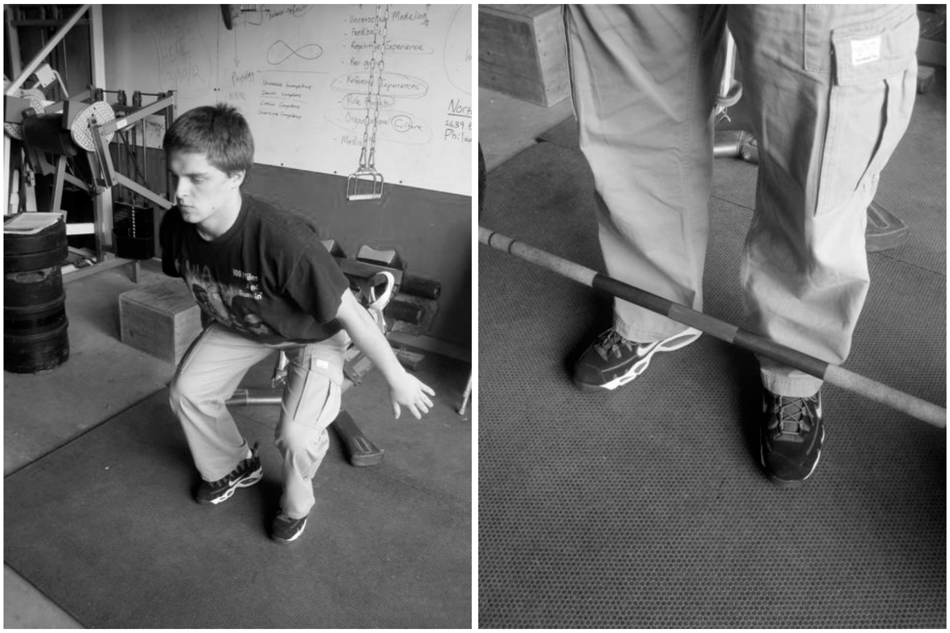
The deadlift is the brother lift to the squat. Together they make a hell of a one-two punch in terms of building global strength. The deadlift, like the squat, should be included in any solid strength-training program.

Performing the deadlift is quite simple. It involves picking a barbell up off the ground, an action that every human has performed with other objects since they were old enough to do so. Despite the inherent ability that human beings have to use instinctive mechanics to pick up a load in this manner, many seek to complicate the performance of the lift by over-emphasizing the all-unimportant details of its execution.

Let me qualify this by saying that it is necessary to understand how to execute the lift “correctly” in terms of reducing the risk of injury, but beyond that there is not much of a difference between the technique of a beginner, and the technique of an accomplished deadlifter despite the difference in weight on the bar.

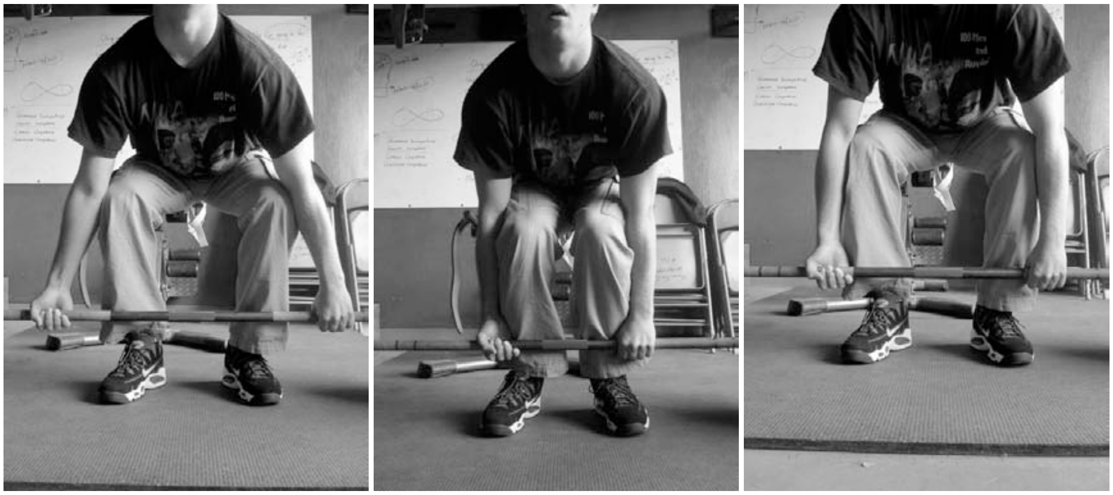
The basic requirements for a well-executed “conventional” deadlift are as follows.

Stance: Assume a stance that approximates the position you would take in order to perform a vertical leap. This will vary from individual to individual, but for most will roughly involve placing the feet under the hips as shown below.



Assuming a stance as if you were to perform a vertical leap.

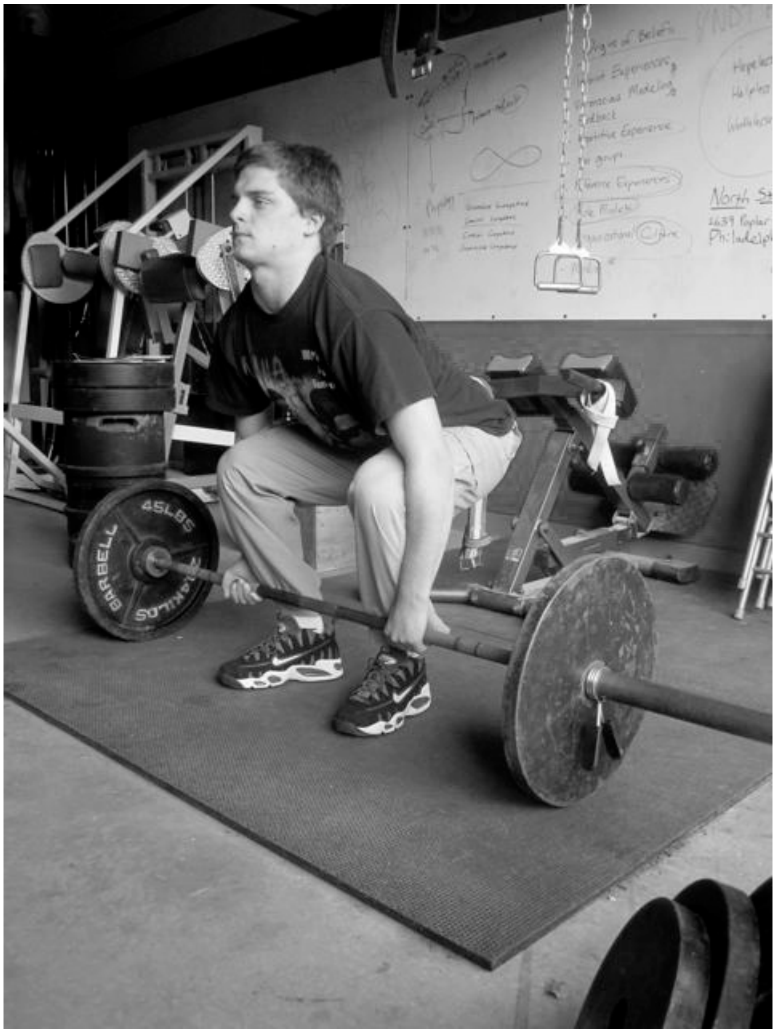
Grip: Take a grip on the bar that has your arms hanging perpendicular to the ground when viewed from the front. It is perfectly appropriate to use an "alternate" grip, meaning that one handed is facing out and one is facing in. Many argue that this negates the grip training effect of the deadlift, to which I say that the deadlift is primarily used to strengthen the musculature of the back, hamstrings, and glutes, all of which are significantly stronger than the grip, and suffer a decreased training effect when the loads are dictated by the strength of the weakest link in the chain.



Deadlift Grip widths from left to right: too wide, too narrow, just right

Position: Once the stance is assumed, and the grip is taken, the lifter then pushes out the chest, and drops the butt in order to place a nice arch in the back. The knees are pushed out a bit more in order to facilitate a bit of additional tightness. The butt will be positioned somewhere between the shoulders and the knees when viewed from the side. Where exactly the butt sits will depend on the build of the lifter.

For instance, a lifter with a back that is short relative to their femurs will have a back position that is more horizontal in appearance than one who is proportioned the opposite way (short femurs, long back). For this reason, deciding on an arbitrary "correct" angle for the back in the deadlift is impossible.



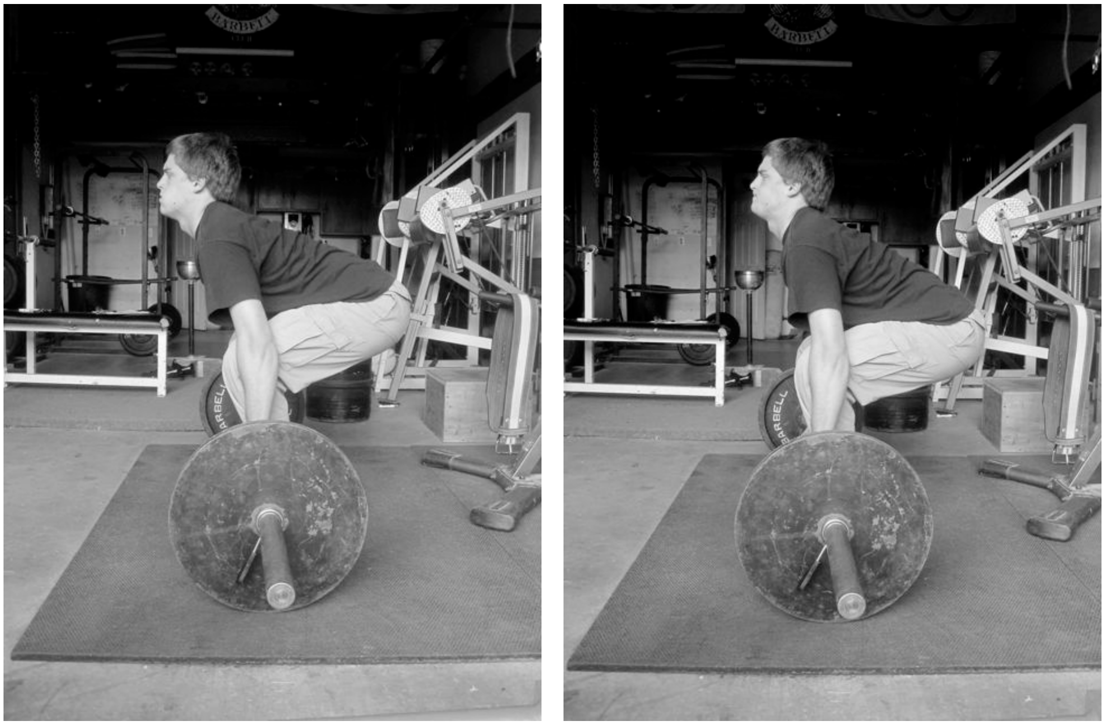
A good Deadlift start position minus the fact that Joe's arms are not straightened out yet.

Execution: Once the proper position is assumed, the last step before the bar breaks the floor happens in two parts.

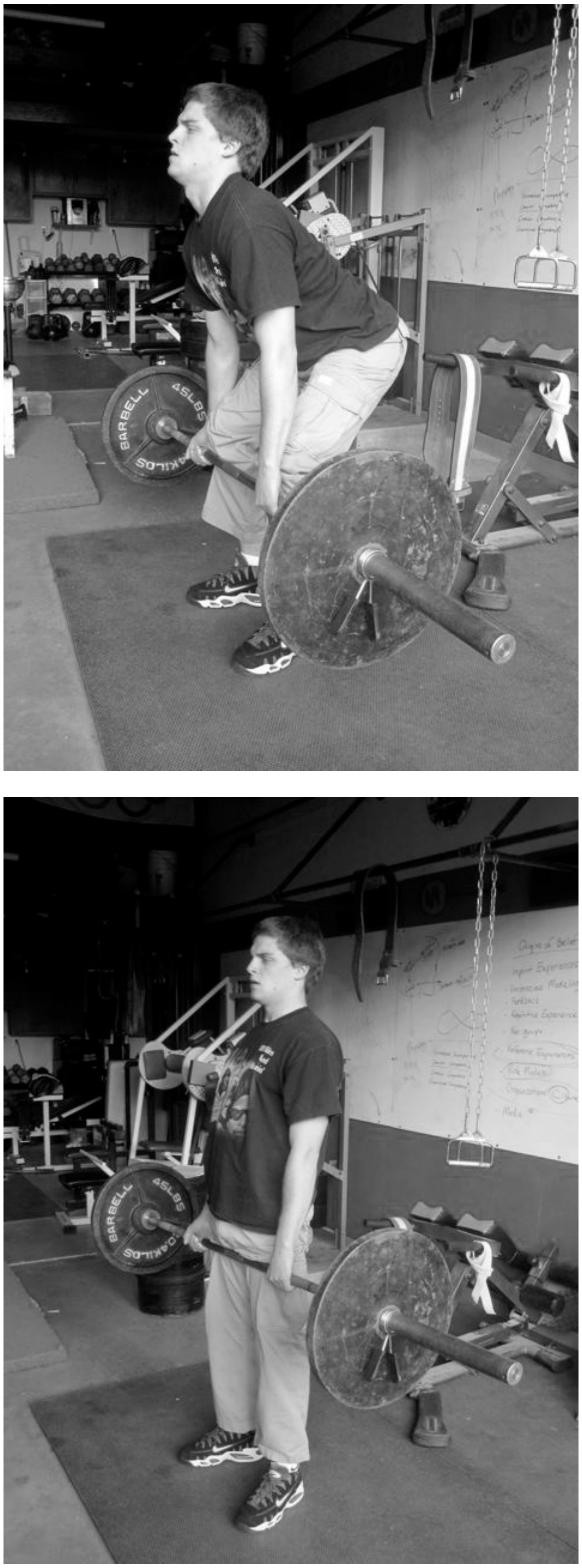
1. The lifter takes all of the "slack" out of the bar, creating as much tightness as possible.
2. The lifter pushes his or her butt to the rear until they experience the sensation that they are going to lose their balance and fall over.

As soon as the lifter experiences that sensation, the bar is squeezed off of the ground and lifted until the hips and knees are extended and the lifter is standing upright. This completes the deadlift.

Returning the bar to the ground involves reversing the process “loosely”, resisting gravity only enough to slow the bars descent and keep it from free-falling to the floor, creating a loud, douchey crash.



The last step before the bar breaks the floor. Note the butt shifting back towards the wall. Once the lifter gets the sensation that they are about to lose their balance, the bar is squeezed off of the floor.



The Deadlift in execution

The Sumo Deadlift

The Sumo Deadlift is, in my opinion, the more natural of the two major deadlift movements. I feel that it more closely resembles how human beings pick objects up off of the ground than the conventional deadlift. It is for this reason that I have found it simpler to teach a lifter to perform correctly than the conventional pull.

Combine this observation with the idea that it is entirely possible to develop as much (if not more in some cases) strength and muscle using the sumo deadlift as the primary pulling movement, and one can ascertain my logic in often recommending the sumo variation as the big pull in a strength-training program.

In addition to being at least as effective as the conventional at building strength, our number one priority, the sumo deadlift is also legal in Powerlifting competitions for those who choose to compete in the sport. Another benefit of the movement, particularly for females who were not blessed with as ample of an ass as they would like is the profound ability for the sumo deadlift to promote significant development in the glutes.

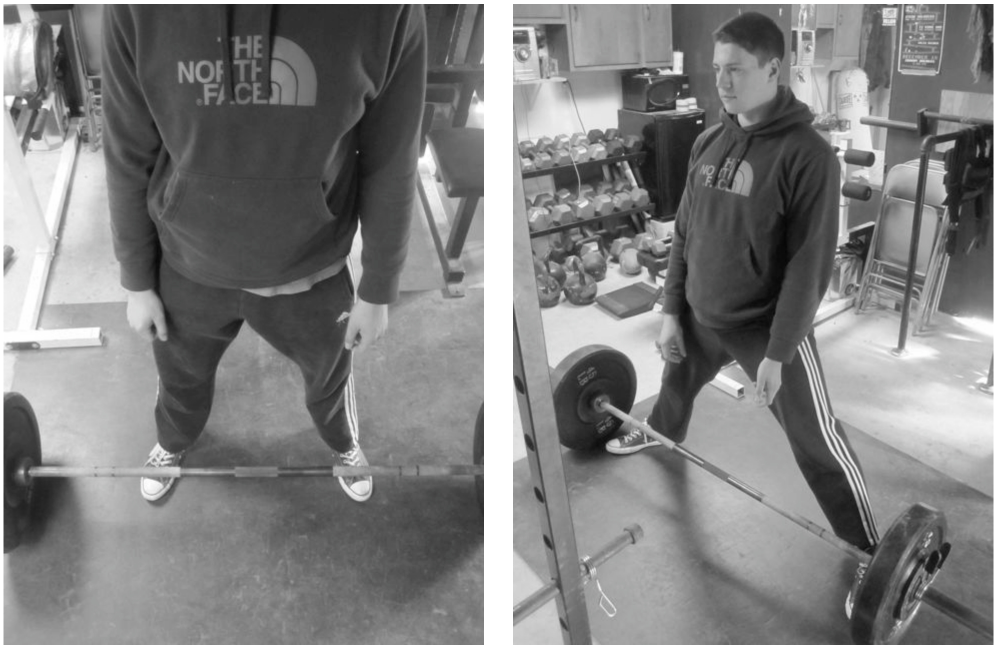
Think of the sumo deadlift vs. the conventional deadlift less like a Phillips vs. a slotted screwdriver, and more like a Stanley Phillips screwdriver vs. a Craftsman Phillips screwdriver. Basically they are brother lifts that can accomplish the same task. Make your selection based on which you feel more comfortable with, or alternate the methods in your training. In either case you will reap the rewards of picking heavy weights up from the ground.

Performing the sumo deadlift is very simple, and involves performing the same steps as the conventional deadlift with one major difference.

Stance: The sumo deadlift uses a wider stance than the conventional deadlift, hence its name (the position looks similar to the position a sumo wrestler assumes before the match). It is common to see a very exaggeratedly wide stance used, particularly with powerlifters who are interested mainly in shortening the distance of the pull in order to let them move a few more pounds in competition. I do not advocate that style of stance for strength training. A correct sumo stance in my book has the shins perpendicular with the ground. The legs need to push into the ground as in the squat, and therefore should be in a position that maximizes their ability to do so.

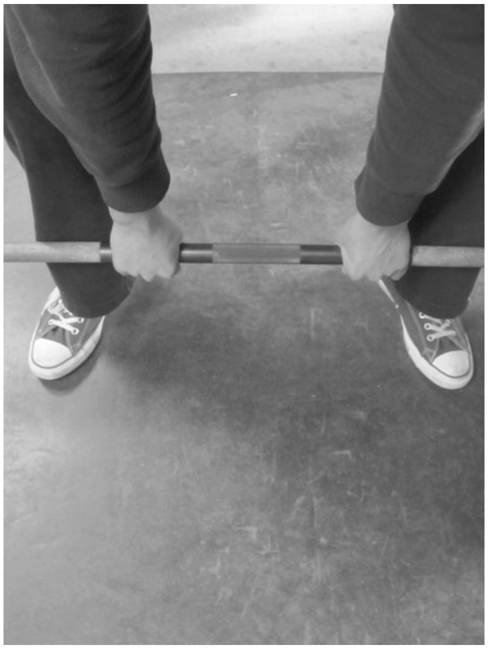
Think of the lower legs as the legs of an “H” and not of an “M”.

A decent rule for determining the correct stance width is to have the lifter stand in their squat stance. The two are remarkably similar in most cases.



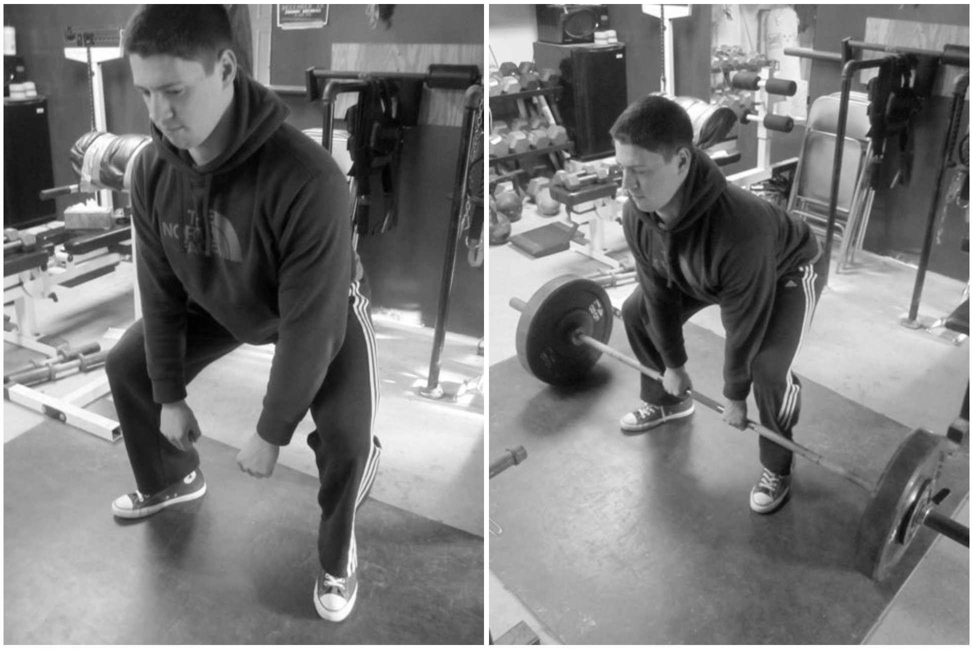
On the left, Drago takes his squat stance at the bar. On the right he demonstrates a stance that is much too wide.

Grip: Once the stance taken, the hands come down to the bar. Here we use the same rule as the conventional deadlift in that we want the arms to hang vertically, perpendicular to the bar and the floor. Again, it is appropriate to use an alternate grip or straps if desired.



Position: The process for assuming the correct sumo deadlift can be summed to most by simply instructing them to "stand like a gorilla". By this I mean stand with the chest out and your butt low. Most everyone can produce a visual of this on command (unless they have never seen a gorilla).

The most significant piece of the position step is making sure that the chest is pushed out hard, and the lower back is "set" read: arched.

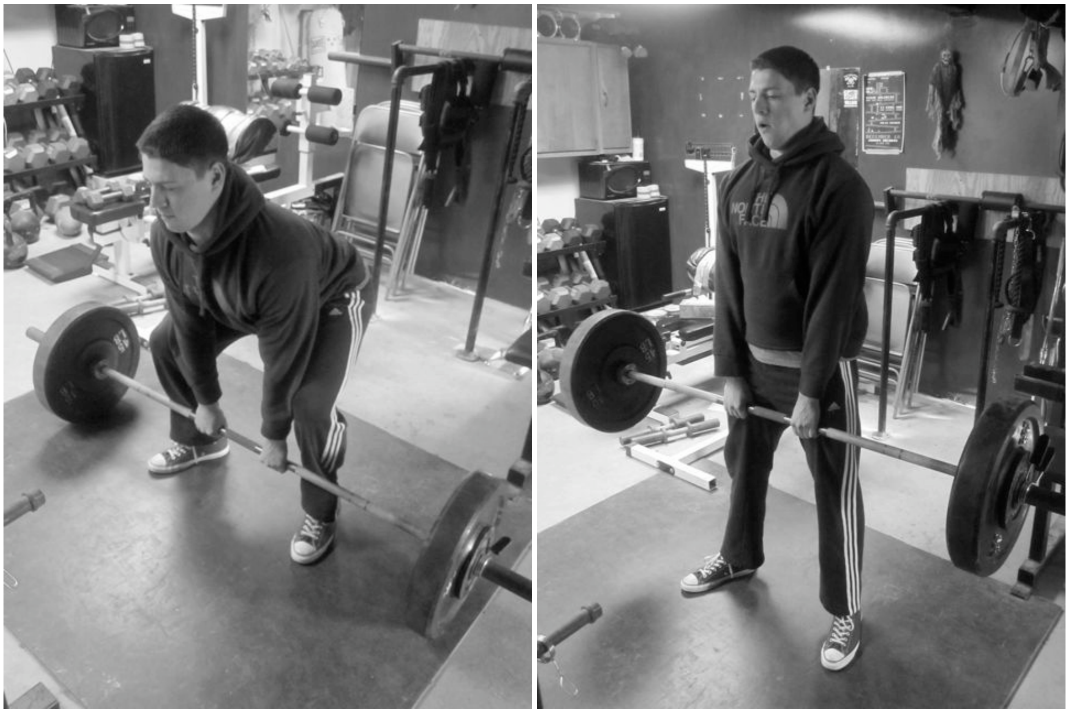


Drago stands "like a gorilla" in the photo to the left; note the similarity between the gorilla stance and the correct Sumo Deadlift start position.

Execution: As in the conventional deadlift, there are two steps to the last portion of the sumo deadlift prior to the bar leaving contact with the floor.

1. The lifter takes all of the "slack" out of the bar, creating as much tightness as possible.
2. The lifter pushes his or her butt to the rear until they experience the sensation that they are going to lose their balance and fall over.

As soon as the lifter experiences that sensation, the bar is squeezed off of the ground and lifted until the hips and knees are extended and the lifter is standing upright. This completes the sumo deadlift.



The Sumo Deadlift

Again, returning the bar to the ground involves reversing the process “loosely”, resisting gravity only enough to slow the bars descent and keep it from free-falling to the floor, creating a loud, douchey crash. In case you haven’t picked up on it yet, douchey crashes are not a good thing in my book.

The Deficit Deadlift

The deficit is an extremely effective tool for developing strength from the floor. I use the lift extensively with individuals who have gotten stuck on the conventional or sumo deadlift in terms of making forward progress. As I address in some of my other products, the effectiveness of this lift in that application has less to do with a particular characteristic of the lift, and more to do with the effect of perceived change of stimulus in the lifter's brain, particularly if they are the of the traditional "program shopper" ilk.

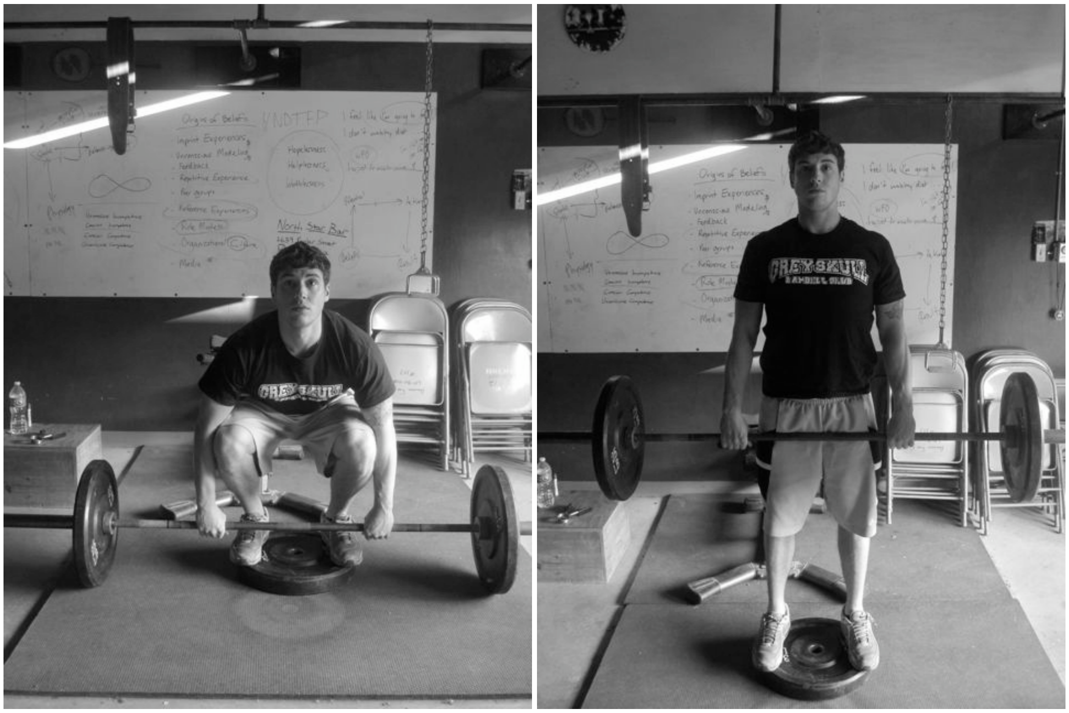
In addition to using the lift to help many get "unstuck", I have used the lift many times as a contrast prior to having a lifter attempt a personal record deadlift from the floor. Commonly I have observed a lifter pull a heavy single or double from a deficit, after which I remove the deficit, add weight, and have the lifter pull from the floor. This has resulted in a personal record deadlift for many of my trainees over the years.

The execution of the deficit deadlift is simple. It follows the same steps as the conventional deadlift outlined before. The only major difference in the position is that the hips will be much higher than in the pull from the floor.

The only additional equipment that is required is a platform of some sort for the lifter to stand on that is higher than the floor. Three and a half inches has long been the magic number at Greyskull. There is no scientific reason for this figure, it is simply the height of one our thirty-five pound rubber bumper plates, which are rarely used and therefore available for standing on, plus a piece of half-inch plywood.

The lift can be performed from lesser heights; I am only sharing the three and a half inch idea for some reference.

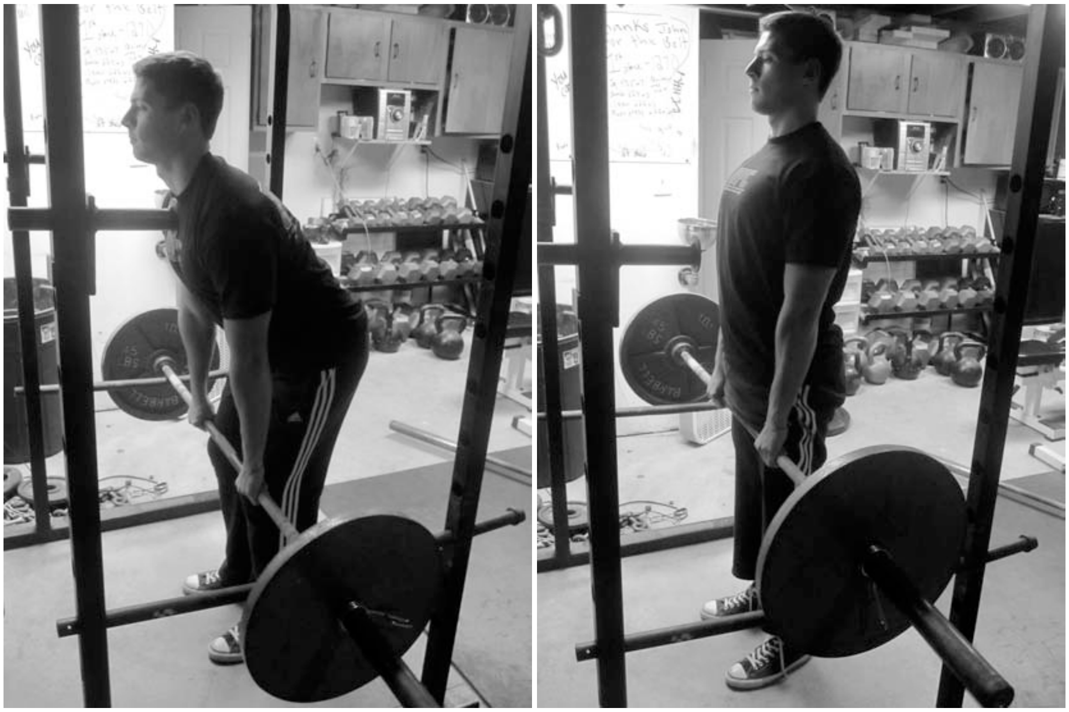
The deficit platform; in this case a rarely used thirty-five pound bumper plate.



The Deficit Deadlift

The Rack Pull

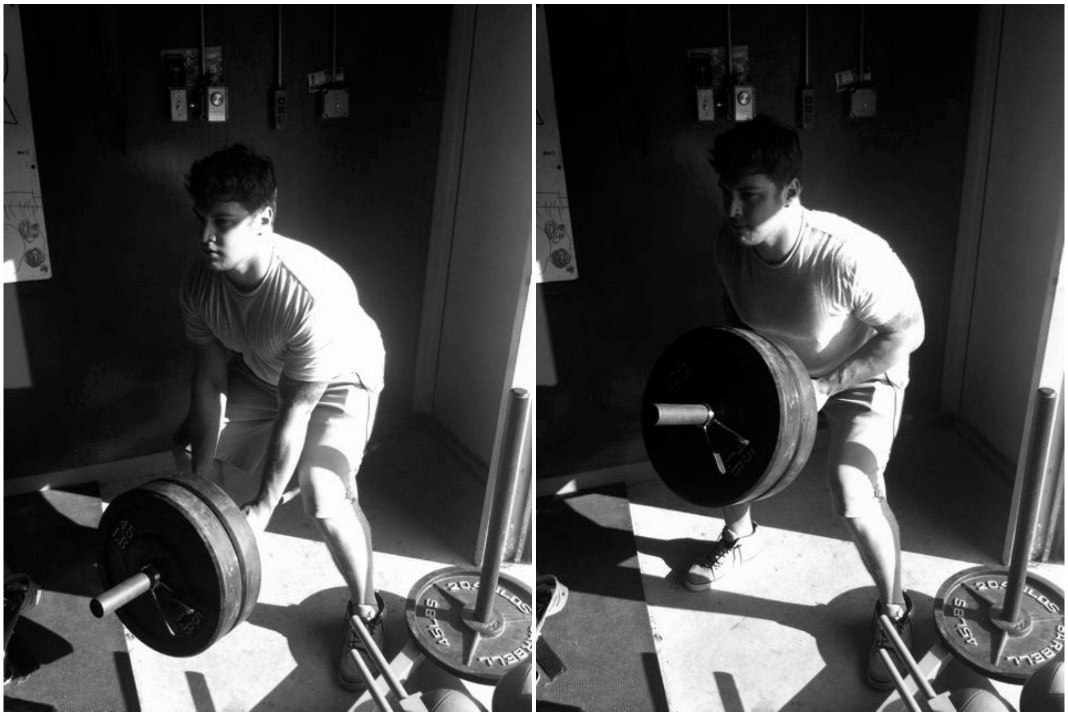
Set the pins in the rack to just above the knee. Keep the chest pushed out and push the ground away with the feet.



The Rack Pull

The T-Bar Row

- Bent Knees
- Chest Out/Low Back Arched
- Pull with the elbows using the hands as hooks

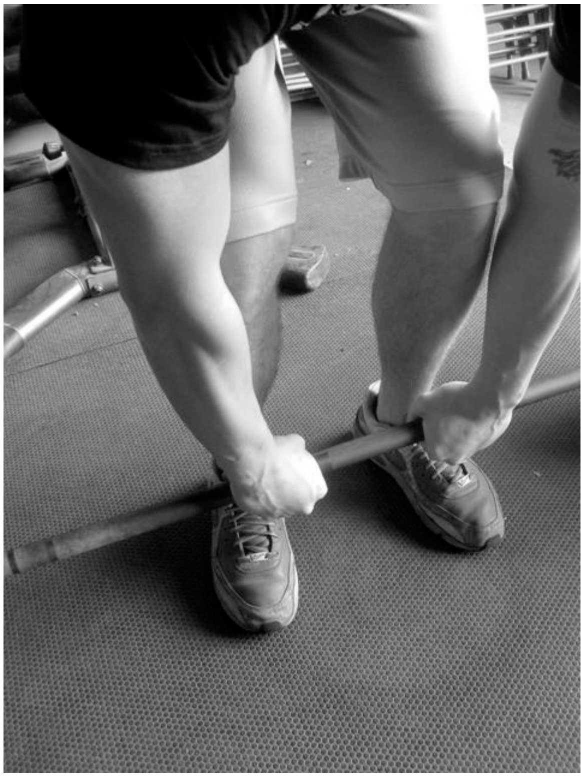


The T-Bar Row

The Yates Row

Made famous and named after Dorian Yates, this is without a doubt my favorite rowing movement. It admittedly is difficult for some to get the hang of, despite its simplicity and short range of motion, but learning to perform the lift correctly is well worth the effort.

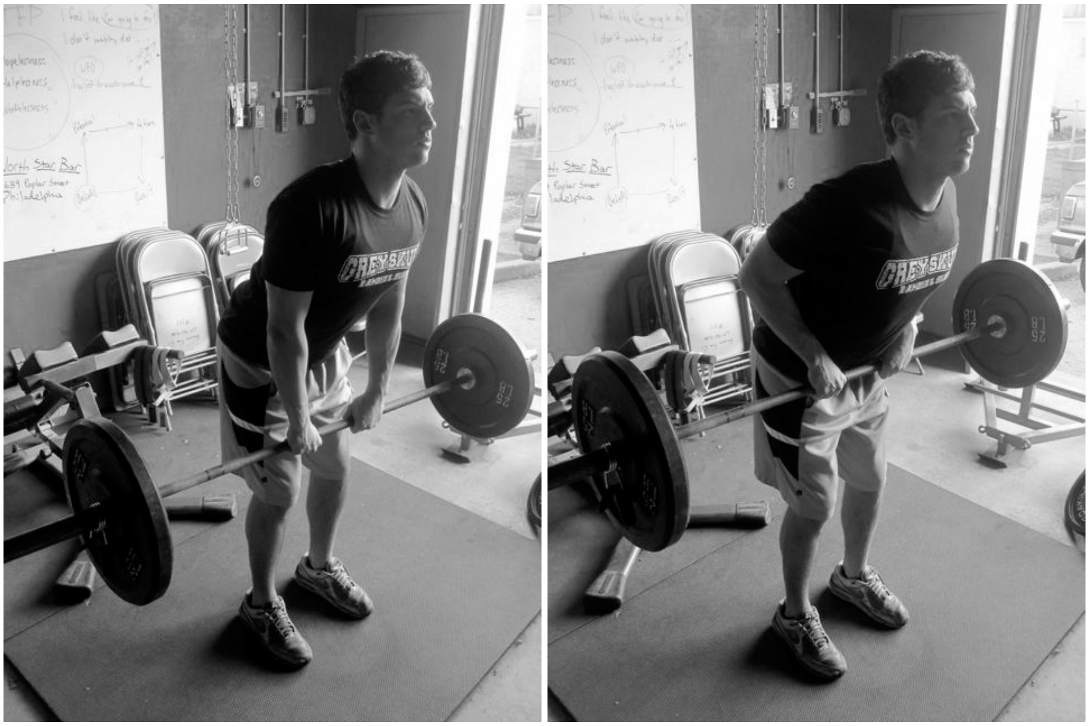
The lift begins similar to a conventional deadlift in terms of stance. The grip is a bit narrower however; the hands should be inside of the hips as shown. The lifter picks the bar up from the ground, keeping the knees bent slightly, and assumes a back position that is near vertical. Some call this lift the seventy-degree row due to the angle of the back.



Position for the Yates row at the floor

The torso and lower-body remain motionless throughout the movement. The only portion of the body that moves is the arm. The elbows are driven back behind the body, bringing the bar into the bladder area. There is no pause with the Yates row, it is a power movement, and is used to move the heaviest weight possible without moving any other portion of the body.

Done correctly the Yates row will hammer the lats directly unlike any other movement.



The Yates Row

Conclusion

Now you have the fundamentals of the type of Powerbuilding training that goes on here at Greyskull. The information presented, when applied consistently, and with the appropriate focus, will allow you to add serious size and strength to your frame. For those who have graduated from the GSLP, this is your next step.

As always I encourage you to contact me with any questions that you might have regarding any of the material presented in this book.

I can be contacted via email at:

john@villainintl.com

Best of luck in your training.